To CHATEAUBRIANT
To LAVAL
Condé
To LEMANS
Pont-Château
Nort
Angers
Loire
Chalonnes
St. Lambert
Paimbœuf
Montrevault
Chemillé
Gonnard
Nantes
Vallet
Le May
Vihiers
Bourgneuf
Clisson
Cholet
St. Philbert
Passavant
Tiffauges
Argenton
Montaigu
Chantillon
Sèvre
Challans
Liégé
Les Herbiers
Les Quatres Chemins
Bressuire
Les Essartes
Palluau
Pouzauges
Amailloux
Aizenay
La Roche sur Yon
VENDÉE
Parthenay
Ste. Hermine
Forest of Mervent
Mazieres
Les Sables
Avrille
Luçon
Fontenay
Phlé
R. LAY
Maillezais
FENS
Damvix
Coulon
Niort
Sèvre
Villedoux
St-Martin
Ile de Ré
Ferrières
Beauvoir sur Niort
La Rochelle
Surgères
BAY OF BISCAY
Cire d'Aunis
Loulay
Aulnay
Ile d'Oléron
St-Pierre
Rochefort
St-Jean d'Angély
Moëze
Fenioux
Brouage
Marennes
Matha
La Trent-blade
Saintes
Charente
Burie
Saujon
Cognac
Royan
Cozes
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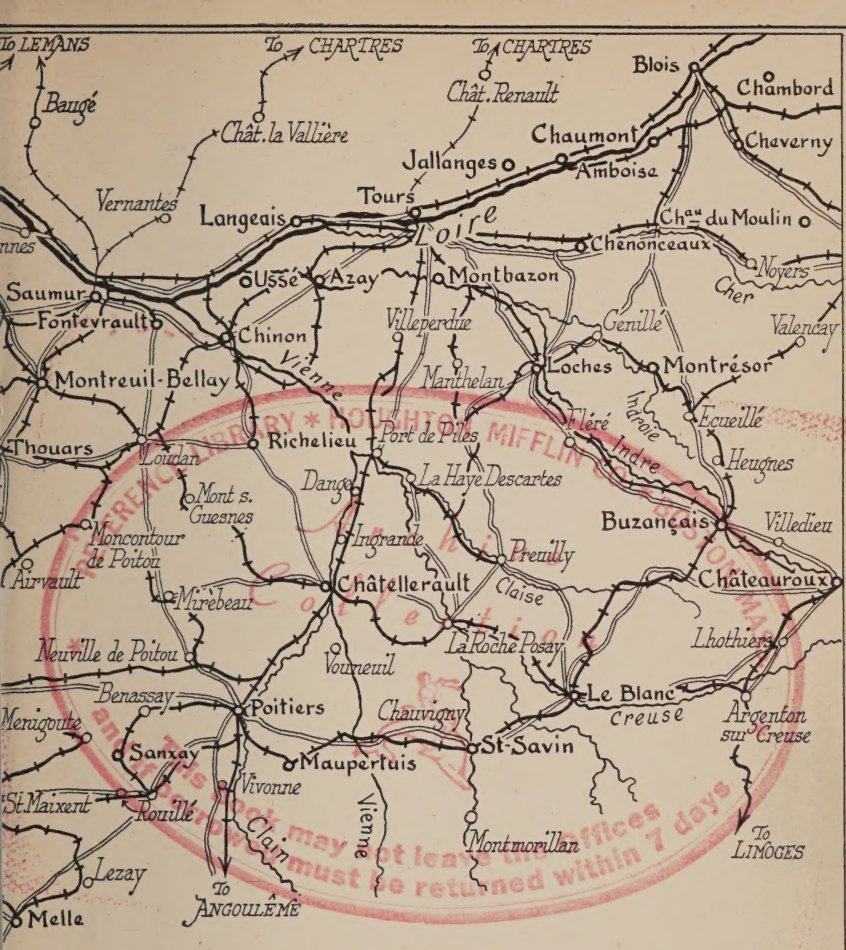

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A Map to Illustrate

A WAYFARER ON THE LOIRE

A WAYFARER ON THE LOIRE

RUE DU FORT, SAUMUR

A WAYFARER ON THE LOIRE

BY

E. I. ROBSON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP BY

J. R. E. HOWARD

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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PREFACE

THE title of this travel-record might perhaps more fitly be "A Wayfarer on and off the Loire," since without pursuing the river into Anjou I seized the opportunity, as I hope many others may, of dropping down South, as far as the Garonne estuary, in order to see and study something of Poitou, Saintonge, and Aunis.

The Loire, if only from Blois to Saumur, will repay a long visit. But since many travellers run through it rather rapidly, in tourist fashion, it may be well for them to know of the many interests awaiting them in this pleasant district of Western France.

Of this, as of my preceding book, Mrs. Latimer Jackson most kindly read through the typescript with her husband. Both gave me much welcome criticism and help. I can now express my thanks, alas! to her alone.

E. I. R.

April 1926

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A WAYFARER ON THE LOIRE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE part of France through which I "wayfared" is really (in the old divisions) Touraine (for the Loire), Poitou and Aunis, with a strip of Saintonge. The end-paper map will make this clearer.

Many people who visit Western France will do so going to or from the western Pyrenees from or to the Loire. It might be convenient, therefore, to follow a north to south, or south to north, route in the following pages. But the actual route followed will be as far as possible kept to. The book is a record of actual wayfarings. The starting-place for Poitou and the south-west will be Niort in the central Poitevin plain, thence to and about Saintes, west to the coast, up the coast to Les Sables; and so home. As the Loire was "worked" both up and down, the journey actually ended at Saumur.

As for my means of travel, they were the usual homely methods of train, motor-bus, occasionally a hired car, to cut off awkward corners and to avoid long waits at junctions, and, where necessary, the char-à-banc or "autocar." These are necessary now and then; one cannot well "work" the Loire without them. But they are very unsatisfactory in many ways. One does one's tour and sees things of interest; but one has little

opportunity for any real study of castles or anything else. If anyone wishes to get a real grip of the interiors, he must study it carefully before in the guide-books, and know exactly what to look for. It is, for instance, a little annoying to learn, just when you are being driven by some bustling guide out of some hall or room, that in a dark corner there lurk half a dozen genuine (and good) Palissy dishes. My own method is to get into each room in the first lot of the tourists and always to leave last [1]; then one can get at the painting which is not being described, and look at the furniture and china in comparative peace while the guide is discoursing on the bed-tester. The real intimate things, like Catherine de Médicis' *prie-dieu*, one can generally know of beforehand, and examine them while the rest of the char-à-banc load is observing the "magnificent view over the lake."

Let it not be thought that I speak ill of the guides. If I am not mistaken, they go through some sort of course in Paris—at least some of them—possibly at the Musée de Cluny and in the Bibliothèque Nationale, and as guides they are, at least on the Loire, quite good. The French are excellent archæologists, even if they love a friendly "scrap" perhaps more than our more sober students do. One does not often find the really ignorant guide. Moreover, the women guides seem to be partly chosen for their enunciation,[2] and it is a great pleasure to listen to their clear and often beautiful intonation, especially in Touraine, where, they say, the best French is spoken. Thus the dull enumerations of length and breadth and numbers of bricks and even dates often

[1] The disadvantage of this is that you are often looked upon as a suspicious character.

[2] In any case, Touraine enunciation is generally very attractive.

become a pleasure, and, for a time at least, one repents of one's resolve to murder at sight the next person who utters " . . . ième siècle."

But, to come back to the fashion of my wayfaring, the best is done on foot. Those who take over their own cars have an immense convenience; but they miss almost as much as they gain. No old market-women in the third-class carriages; no crowds of excited children off to the seaside with the never-forgotten pail and spade; no knots of patient but merry people at roadside stations waiting for the train which is only three-quarters of an hour late, and making unintelligible jokes about the cause of the delay; and, oh! to think that I might have motored, instead of walking, across the Ile de Ré! Those, therefore, who have their cars I urge to pass a self-denying ordinance, and, having reached their centre of excursions, to pull out some crucial bolt and hide it awhile, and fare forth on foot or in the humble vehicles of the populace.

When I determined to " work " this bit of Western and South-Western France after the glories of the Loire, I must frankly confess I thought I was in for rather a dull time. The flat central plain of Poitou filled me with alarm. I reflected that La Rochelle was rather a modern city. Of Saintes I had read some rather unenthusiastic accounts. The easterly portion, and parts also of the extreme west, I had traversed before, and knew something of the splendours of Poitiers and other " show " places. I thought of other more exciting parts of France which I wished to revisit, and sighed. But I was most happily disillusioned. The plain has great charms; the fens are, in parts, excellent; the towns are all interesting; there are castles elsewhere than on the Loire;

the whole district is full of history; the villages are often charming, and having acquired, since my first visit to Poitou, a very considerable taste for Romanesque architecture, I had, in almost every little hamlet, a perfect feast of lovely doorways, pillars, capitals, windows, and those very intriguing little apses which cluster round east ends.

There are other, more material, joys. Cooking is excellent, wines (except, oddly enough, as one approached Bordeaux) delicate and insinuating; and in no part of France have I found hotels so consistently good, the best being those frequented by commercial people. Nearly all these are "no-tip" hotels, and always I got good service. Some—departing from usual custom—I mention *honoris causa*: the *Commerce* at Saintes, the *France* at Fontenay, the *Trois Piliers* of Poitiers, the *Négociants* of Tours, the *Paix* of Saumur. I stayed at many humbler places and only once was I "let down," and there the fault was mine and not of the place. Nor had I ever occasion to grumble at expense. On the Loire, of course, charges are higher than farther south, but even there we did well, and it was with real regret we left the *Gerbe d'Or* at Blois, numbered, in the guides, among the *modestes*.

One word about wines. The unskilled traveller should always ask for a wine of the country or the neighbourhood. One hears timid people ordering, even at Saumur, some well-known brand of Bordeaux or Burgundy ("to be on the safe side, you know"), while they might have, for a smaller cost, something very pleasant with a slight sparkle. At Luçon I stumbled thus on the excellent vintage of Mareuil; and on the Ile de Ré, after walking through most desolate-looking vineyards, I had a most delicate *ordinaire* at lunch.

Professor Saintsbury (in his *Scrap-Books*) is very hard on the rather sweet wines of Anjou. But you may have them dry, or half-dry; and the plain fact is that we English, though we are brought up to ask for "extra-dry," in our heart of hearts like the rather sweet varieties. A simple natural-sparkling wine like Faye [1] may move the Professor's wrath, but it is very pleasant to the palate. Thus, all round, Western France, inland or coast line, is a good place for wayfarers.

Here follow some odd notes.

It may be worth while reminding travellers that it is a polite custom in France to apologize, by a slight bow, to anyone to whom you sit opposite. Little politenesses of this kind will help you on your way.

One of the advantages of travel is that, provided one keeps one's eyes and ears open, plenty of small things will occur to please even great minds. For instance, I am no doubt still rather a raw traveller and am pleased with small things, but I am always delighted at seeing and hearing little children playing with a puppy. It seems so clever of the infants to speak such good French, and cleverer of the puppy to understand them.

People who collect curious inn signs can find many odd ones in France. *Aux trois nez rouges* is a good one. Why three? Is it one's own, and the landlord's apparent two? Those, too, who are on the look-out for strange names will be pleased to find a large and excellent hotel "run" by M. Bourreau, who slaughters, no doubt, nothing worse than tender calves for the inevitable (though welcome) dish of veal. An optician was M. Luneteau, and there was an appropriate name of some sort over a *pompes funèbres* shop, where they supplied wreaths *en gros*—just the place for the office-boy of the

[1] From Faye-Chanzé, south of Angers.

comic papers. The first halt from Mervent in the autobus is called *La Joltière.*

But the record was reached in another *couronnes mortuaires* shop, actually kept by another M. Bourreau! One knew they did something in the old clothes line, but this double job was really coming it rather strong.

CHAPTER II

THE LOIRE AND ITS CASTLES

A JOURNEY must always begin at its beginning, and adventures began early with a burning bridge which threw our train service into sad confusion and meant a wild rush at Victoria, and an over-full train, where we should have stood uncomfortably till Dover but for some kind engine-drivers who admitted us to their reserved compartment. The drivers themselves were solemn men, with deep creases in their necks; the firemen were more talkative, and we got into deep technicalities of the new engines, just then put on the line. One seemed to be living in a Kipling story. Now and then the two drivers would exchange remarks about passing trains, as to which they were very wise. No longer will a passing train be to me a nasty, noisy, snaky, anti-Ruskinian abomination, filled with grumpy passengers, that shrieks hideously past; rather I shall wonder if old Bill or old Dick is driving her, and whether his little girl is just passing out of school, or, indeed, putting her hair up, and if his little boy has, or has not, the measles. Evidently, there is a deal of human nature in trains.

So safe to Paris, where we are welcomed by Pierre, the waiter, and Wolf, the Alsatian dog; and thence in much comfort to Blois and the Loire.

Those who wish to make a very serious study of the castles of the Loire will have no lack of books in which

to learn the history of French architecture, and the way in which it was influenced by French history.

Perhaps it may be just as well to put down briefly a few suggestions to guide the tourist in his observations, though it cannot be too often suggested that it is well he should make as far as possible his own studies on the spot and correct his impressions afterwards.

It is a good rule, if one is going sightseeing on any historic ground, to study a little before and very much afterwards. I have also already suggested that an inquiring mind is one of the best of all informants.

There are, perhaps, three points of view which it is well to take.

We can study our castles, first, architecturally. We see the old fortress, which is fortress pure and simple. The absence of windows will generally mean either that the building is extremely old or that, being later, it serves no purpose but that of stronghold. Then, as artillery began to develop, we find the type of castle begins to change. Something had to be built strong enough to resist the early cannon-balls, and the large mass of buildings had to be protected by towers built out and usually round, off which the projectiles might glance. Then again, so far as concerns the defence of the castle, there is a stage where it was anticipated that the defence would be carried on chiefly by archers, and there is a later stage for which special preparation had to be made, where cannons were also used in defence. Then we get to the further period when a time of peace had seemed to dawn upon France, and at the same time there was a wave of new architectural developments, largely the result of contact with Italy. Here we find the residence built into the fortress, generally in such a way as still to receive the necessary protection from the

outbuildings. These blends of fortress and residence we see all along the Loire. Then we get the residence pure and simple, the great country manor-house such as we see at Chenonceaux and to a certain extent at Plessis-les-Tours. These, if they are early, belonged to simple citizens, who were rich enough to build them but not powerful enough to fear attack, but later, when the state of France seemed to justify a feeling of peace and contentment, we get parts of the great feudal castles destroyed and charming residences built in their place. We see, for instance, the wing of Francis I at Blois, built inside the enclosure, succeeded by the great front of Gaston of Orleans which needs no fortification of any kind any longer.

One's general impression of the châteaux is that there is too much straight plain façade. Of course this is a Renaissance feature, one gets it strongly in the Gaston d'Orleans front of Blois, at Thouars, and in many of the lesser châteaux. It is the irregularity of Amboise and Loches and du Moulin that charms so wonderfully.

Next we can study our castles merely from the picturesque point of view, and here we shall find that the smaller castles are very often the most beautiful. In any case, with the exception of Langeais, we shall find infinite variety in the types of architecture employed. Moreover, we shall find variety of setting. A castle placed in the Sologne, where there was not much natural beauty, must have beauty, as it were, supplied to it. There will be more ornamentation, the gardens and parks will be more carefully studied. Use will be made of any river or lake to set off the approach to the entrance, or, as was at one time intended at Chambord, a river may actually be diverted to give the necessary amenities.

Then, of course, we can study them from the purely historical standpoint. The Loire was at one time the central river of France. The struggles of France with Burgundy and the dangers she dreaded from Brittany made Paris a capital very difficult to defend. For a long time, therefore, Touraine was the actual centre of all French life. It was not till France became united and settled that there came the trend back again towards Paris and the building of the castles of Fontainebleau and Versailles. Again, rivers depended for their utility upon the type of craft which could navigate them. So long, therefore, as ships were of shallow draft, rivers were navigable very much farther than they are at the present day. We find, therefore, that the Loire was also a great centre of trade. Gradually this centre shifted farther and farther towards the mouth, and now, of course, it centres round Nantes and St-Nazaire.

Further, there is the individual interest. We can hardly pass through a single château of the Loire, except such as stand aside from the general current of the Loire life, where we do not find definite reminders of the royal house of France and of her great men like the Guises and Richelieu and of celebrated women who played their part in history. There is a certain amount of comfort, perhaps, to any Englishman—though it is only a poor comfort—to find that the kings and queens of France who pass like a strange phantasmagoria through the Loire châteaux, were on the whole rather worse than our own kings and queens. Some of them deserve praise. There were some good and suffering queens, and more than one king made some definite attempt to be the Father of his People. Amid and around all this great life, centre as it was of sordid intrigue and every kind of jealousy, there circulated the

great literary, artistic, and popular movements of the day. If kings were crushing their people with taxation, at least they were giving employment to some of the great architects and the master-builders of their time. Round the Loire, therefore, we shall find everything that tells us of the growth of French literature and French art, and though there has no doubt been a good deal of Italian influence along the Loire as elsewhere, it seems pretty certain now that most of the best work done there was done by Frenchmen. Looming like a dark cloud all the time we see the coming Revolution. The extravagance of the French Court, the constant cruelties, and that strange carelessness that seems to have pervaded those blessed with the riches of this world (with rare exceptions, such as Agnès Sorel herself), were bound to bring their own retribution. Popular revolt expressed itself first in what are called the Religious Wars, but meanwhile the clouds in the distance were piling the dim outline of the coming doom.

Nothing is more charming or exhilarating at present than a visit to the Loire. We should try to forget as much as we can of this dark side, and only be thankful that so many glorious beauties have been saved for us and made, as they are, so accessible even to the humblest of tourists.

Benedetto Croce has drawn a very excellent distinction —though it may at first seem paradoxical—between dead fact and live fact. If the writer of *Mrs. Magnall*, or of *Little Arthur's History*, or of any of the excellent histories of England—nay, if I myself state that Julius Cæsar came to Britain, that Henry VIII had several successive wives, that is but a dead fact of history. Somebody has told us. It is not really part of our being. It really does not so very much matter. If I

learn that Hecuba, Queen of Priam, was carried into captivity and became a Niobe of sorrows, it stirs my sympathies; but after all, what's Hecuba to me, or I to Hecuba?

But when you find in an old monkish chronicle or cartulary that "This day the 2nd of February, being the Feast of the Purification, in the year of our Salvation 1103, there was felt a shaking of the earth which rang the great bell of the church, and did bring the brethren out of bed to matins an hour too soon, and also brake sundry pots in the kitchen, whereat our Lord Abbot was much displeased," there you have living fact, living history; it has been passed direct to you through a human medium; you have the fact in direct relation to mankind. Diaries are live history, therefore, and "histories" themselves often dead. You can get that vivifying power not only by contact with the human mind, but by contact and association with things. That is why a visit to the Loire is so intensely fascinating. It all lives. There is the oratory of Catherine de Médicis; there she knelt, praying for—what? There is the gallery whence hung those unhappy conspirators of Amboise: there the spot where others were massacred; here is the little chapel where Leonardo saw visions; there is the window whence Jeanne d'Arc looked over the Vienne, waiting, waiting. It is all wonderfully close, wonderfully alive. Guides' history, reeling off like a tape-machine, excellent though it may be of its kind, is but dead stuff. But stand aside from the crowd, pining to be aboard its char-à-banc again, and you will see visions. The dead will come alive; the tourist crowds will fade into groups of courtiers, maids of honour, soldiers, pages, merry kings, and broken-hearted queens.

The following short conspectus of French kings may be useful :—

VALOIS. (Descendants of Charles de Valois, brother of Philippe le Bel.)

Philippe VI de Valois, le Hardi. 1328–1350.
Edward III does homage at Amiens for Guienne and Gascony, 1329. Commencement of Hundred Years' War. War of Breton Succession. Crécy, 1346. Black Death in France.

Jean II, le Bon (= *le Brave*). 1350–1364.
1356, War with England. Captured at Maupertuis, taken to London. Attempted revolt of Étienne Marcel. Jacquerie. Peace of Brittany, 1360.

Charles V, le Sage (= *le Savant*). 1364–1380.
Captures back most of the provinces from English. Du Guesclin, de Clisson, Boucicaut. War of Breton Succession, or Guerre des Deux-Jeannes. Many wise reforms. Founds first Bibliothèque Nationale.

Charles VI, le Bien-Aimé. 1380–1422.
Revolte des Maillotins. Replaces his uncles as advisers by les Marmousets. Becomes mad. Bourguignons and Armagnacs. Isabeau de Bavière. Agincourt, 1415. Treaty of Troyes, 1420.

Charles VII, le Victorieux. 1422–1461.
"Roi de Bourges." Jeanne d'Arc. Richemont, La Hire, Xaintraille, Jean Bureau. Agnès Sorel, his "favourite."

Louis XI. 1461–1483.
Treaty of Péronne with Charles le Téméraire, 1468. Siege of Beauvais, 1472. Picquigny, 1475. Battle of Guinegatte. Treaty of Arras, 1482.

Charles VIII. 1483–1498.
Regency of Anne de Beaujeu. Duc d'Orléans' revolt (*Guerre Folle*). Marries Anne de Bretagne. "Hurts his head."

VALOIS-ORLEANS. (Descendants of Louis d'Orléans, brother of Charles VI.)
First branch descended from the first son of Louis d'Orléans.

Louis XII, le Père du Peuple. 1498–1515.

Divorces Jeanne, daughter of Louis XI, and marries Anne de Bretagne. League of Cambrai against Venice. Victory of Aguadel. Sainte Ligue: Gaston de Foix. Defeat of Guignegatte. Marries three months before his death Mary of England, sister of Henry VIII.

Second branch (Orléans-Angoulème), descended from the third son of Louis d'Orléans.

François Ier. 1515–1547.

Marries Claude de France, daughter of Louis XII. Disputes the Empire with Charles V of Spain. Journée de Pavie. Treaty of Madrid. Peace of Cambrai. Alliance with Turks and Protestants. Charles V invades Provence: Treaty of Nice, 1538. War again. Peace of Crespy, 1544. Innovations—registers of births and deaths, etc. Attracts to France da Vinci, Cellini, Titian.

Henri II. 1547–1559.

Continues struggle against Charles V. Captures Metz, Toul, and Verdun. Philippe II d'Espagne, allied with English, takes St-Quentin. Duc de Guise captures Calais from English, 1558. Peace de Cateau-Cambresis. Dies of a lance-thrust in a tourney. Had married Catherine de Médicis, 1533. He mistakenly helped the rise of the Guises.

François II. 1559–1560.

Marries Marie Stuart, and is completely under the influence of the Guises, who repressed most severely the Conjuration d'Amboise.

Charles IX. 1560–1574.

The first war of religion, ended by the Peace of Amboise. During this war François de Guise is assassinated. Second war of religion. Third war of religion (combats of Jarnac and Moncontour), ended by peace of St-Germain. Massacre of St-Bartholomew. Fourth war of religion. Fifth is beginning when Charles dies.

Henri III. 1574–1589.

His favourites, *les mignons*. Catholics form against him the Sainte Ligue. He declares himself the head of

the Ligue (Blois). The real head, Henri de Guise. War of the three Henris. Henri de Guise at Paris. Journée des Barricades. Murder of Duc de Guise at Blois. King is assassinated by monk, Jacques Clément.

BOURBONS. (Descendants of Robert, Comte de Clermont, sixth son of St-Louis.)

Henry IV. 1589–1610.
Marries Marguerite de Valois. Conqueror at Arques and Ivry. Abjures Protestantism in 1593. Enters Paris, hitherto held by the Seize. Edict of Nantes. Biron executed. Helped by Sully in financial reforms. Assassinated by Ravaillac.

Louis XIII. 1610–1643.
Regency of Marie de Médicis. Murder of Concini. Richelieu becomes first minister in 1624; aims at crushing the nobles, destroying the Protestants as a political party, and humbling the House of Austria. King dies a few months after Richelieu.

Louis XIV, le Grand. 1643–1715.
Regency of Anne d'Autriche. Mazarin first minister. The Fronde. Treaty of Westphalia. Louis marries Maria Theresa. Personal rule begins 1661. Colbert succeeds Fouquet as Minister of Finances. War of Devolution; Dutch war; war of the League of Augsburg; war of the Spanish Succession. After Maria Theresa's death, Louis marries secretly Mme de Maintenon. Golden age of literature and art.

Louis XV, le Bien-Aimé. 1715–1774.
Regency of Philippe d'Orléans. Marries Marie Leczinska. Wars of Polish and Austrian Successions; Seven Years' War. Rule of "favourites."

Louis XVI. 1774–1793.
Marries Marie Antoinette. Ministries of Turgot, Malesherbes, and Necker. Queen's influence becomes very great. Recall of Necker. Estates-General meet 1789. Louis imprisoned and executed.

BOOKS ON THE LOIRE AND POITOU

In my studies both of Poitou and Touraine I have made considerable use of French authorities. There

are abundant books in English upon Touraine and the Loire, and I shall not trouble to give an account of them, but those who read French may be glad to know of some of the best French works, in the study of which they can pass very pleasantly some of the winter hours after their return from their annual holiday.

There is the great work of Eyriès on the Historical Châteaux of France, in which some of the Loire châteaux are, of course, to be found.

There is an excellent work, *La Chronique des Châteaux du Loire*, by Pierre Rain.

On Jeanne d'Arc at Chinon there are well-known studies by de Beaucourt, Bossebœuf, Loiseleur (*Questions Historiques*).[1]

On Louis XI there is, of course, the Chronicle of Philippe de Commines.

On Amboise there is a volume in the work upon the Royal Castles of France by Vatout.

On Blois there are works of La Saussaye,[2] and on Louis XII and his connexion with Blois, as well as on Louise de Savoie, there are works by Maulde de la Clavière.

On Chambord there are works by Bourrilly and Merle.[3]

On the story of Henry III and the Guises we have, of course, full accounts in all the histories and a special work by Miron. There are special works also which deal with Chambord in the time of Louis XIV and the performances of Molière, by Pellisson and Lagrange,[4] as well as the *Mémoirs* of St-Simon.

[1] Apart from many larger works (France, Hanotaux, etc.).
[2] *Histoire du Château de Blois, Histoire de la Ville de Blois.*
[3] The titles, where not otherwise given, are suggested by the subject. Merle's book is *Chambord* only.
[4] *Edition des grands écrivains français, préfaces.*

On Marie Leczinska are studies by the Marquise de Réaux and the Comtesse d'Armaille, while the less fascinating subject of Maurice de Saxe is dealt with by St Réné Taillandier.

On Catherine de Médicis many will already know the remarkable work by Balzac.

For the Vendée war there are the *Mémoirs* of Rochejacquelein and of Tourreau de Garambouville.

Then, for special towns, there is the work of the Brothers Musset on Saintes, and there are various works upon La Rochelle, among which one by Arcère and Bégon.

On Romanesque Architecture in Poitou there is a big work by Laferrière and Musset (Georges), *L'Art en Saintonge*.[1]

Speaking generally, it may be well to say that in the shops along the Loire one will usually find only the obvious books. It is well, therefore, on the way back through Paris, to inquire of some good bookseller, and it will be found always most interesting to get hold of the special monographs rather than of any comprehensive guide-books or history books dealing with the Loire as a whole. Books upon the folk-lore and customs of Poitou are not particularly easy to get hold of, but inquiries can always be made at the museums.

It may be added finally that any serious student will always find the greatest kindness and courtesy from the librarians of any of the public libraries, only the warning must be given that these libraries are often unhappily shut and the librarians absent during the months when sightseers are most likely to be visiting Poitou and the Loire.

[1] Difficult now to purchase, but to be seen in libraries. It is admirably illustrated.

CHAPTER III

BLOIS

THE first sight of the Loire at Blois revealed an energetic man, in the water, apparently trying to sweep away the sand from the river bed. He had, I think, something to do with a laundry barge lower down. Every now and then he would stop, look vindictively at the river, as much as to say, "I'll never do it; I'm a beaten man." That, of course, is the trouble of the Upper Loire—its shifting sand-beds. No doubt, but for these, Tours, and not Paris, would have been the capital of France, at least for a great part of its history. The Loire has not been navigable, even in the days of smaller ships, far enough up, though its shallows permitted the passage of an enemy too easily. While therefore the Loire district made a great bid for the central position of France, and had a wonderful array of strong feudal castles, it very soon sank to be a Court playground, while Paris and near it (Fontainebleau, and later, Versailles) became finally and definitely the royal and national centre.

Blois is completely dominated by its castle, but there is a good deal of interest also in the town, or rather the city, and there are a large number of very charming old houses which contrast with several very fine modern streets, the best of which leads direct on to the bridge—the Rue Denis-Papin, from which rises a very beautiful series of steps leading to the statue of Papin, and thence,

by the Rue du Palais, to the cathedral and the terrace of the bishop's palace, from which there is a particularly fine view.

Not far from the castle there is, of course, also the well-known pavilion of Anne of Brittany, a beautiful little piece of Renaissance work built in the gardens of the palace, which originally extended very much farther than they do now, reaching, as they did, to the edge of the forest.

The best church in Blois is St-Nicolas-St-Laumer, of the twelfth and early thirteenth century, of which there is a great deal of fine Romanesque work still left in the interior.

The cathedral is rather disappointing. It is of the sixteenth century and has had restorations or rebuildings since.

The narrow and turning streets through the old town, taking us past the Rue Poids-du-Roi, the Rue des Juifs, and the Rue des Papegaults, have some very fine old houses indeed, and one can wander up and down them for a long time finding at every turn beautiful picturesque structures.

Everyone knows the story of Denis-Papin and his wonderful discovery of the steamboat, and the somewhat sorry way in which he and his boat were treated. At any rate, his memory is now well rehabilitated.

But it is impossible to think of Blois except in terms of the castle, which completely dominates the whole city and from the sight of which one cannot escape even if one wishes. As nearly everyone will know, the plan of the buildings is an irregular sort of square, the buildings being on the side, they are themselves irregular, and they belong to three special periods of construction, from the times of Louis XII, Francis I, and Gaston of Orleans.

The latest part is the heavy walls which support the Salle des États. Then there is an old tower, the Tour des Oubliettes (it has also other names). There was some sort of castle at Blois from very early times indeed.

The wing of Louis XII looks on the court and has a charming portico with a gallery above. The pillars of the portico are varied and the general effect is very fine indeed.

Most people will know that the chief joy of Blois is the great staircase of Francis I, but there are other fine staircases as well.

It is in leaving the wing of Louis XII and going to the left that one comes to the enormous hall of the Counts of Blois, where twice the General Parliament, or États-Généraux, met. The presence of a hall of this kind was necessary in any castle of importance: it would be a place of meeting for the vassals.

The wing of Francis I is that which attracts at once the attention of visitors. It is thought that the architect of Chambord was partly inspired by the work done at Blois, but there is no doubt that here at Blois there is a very great deal of richness and delicacy which one does not get at Chambord. It is in the middle of this front of Francis (of which we do not now get the full effect, because of the later buildings of Gaston of Orleans) that we find the wonderful open staircase, wonderfully ornamented with, of course, the inevitable salamander. Possibly the motto of the salamander may have puzzled a good many visitors, and, if I may venture to suggest, the tourist or visitor in Touraine will be wise if he always asks for the reason why of anything which happens to puzzle him. Why, for instance, such and such a tower or castle is built in such and such a place; why you get this or that kind of royal monogram in one place and

another type elsewhere; why these heraldic animals were chosen by those who bore them as emblems, and what is the meaning of their mottoes? This particular motto puzzled me for a very long time, until I learnt, what I presume I should have guessed, that the motto belongs not to the salamander but to the fire, and that it is Italian and not Latin, and that important words have been left out. It means, speaking of the fire, "I nourish that which is good, but I burn that which is bad"—a very good motto for a king, not, perhaps, for François.

The great wing of Gaston of Orleans is that which one sees from the Place Victor Hugo. One may possibly lament his work, but at the same time the general effect, if monotonous, is very fine. His chief staircase is no longer in the position it should have held, and in many ways the work of Gaston has been very much spoiled by later restorations. We must not, therefore, blame him if we find his wing less pleasing than the others.

As for the gardens of the castle, these were, as we have already seen, very large, extending over a great deal of what is now the city of Blois, and were extremely beautiful. The lower garden was separated from the upper by a fine terrace.

At an early stage the castle was burnt and then rebuilt; that, at least, is the view of certain historians. Others say that the town alone suffered and the castle was left as it was. At any rate, there was a castle, more or less, in our sense of the word, at the time when the Normans were ravaging the country of Blois in 854 and three years later.

The story of Blois is the story of the whole of the French kingdom, but it is also largely the story of England as well in its earlier stages. We find it in the

possession of Stephen and Adela. Stephen, who is celebrated by Tasso, died in the Holy Land in 1102. His widow, Adela, or Alix, administered the County of Blois during the minority of her children. In 1122 she took the veil at the convent of Marcigny. The remainder of the story of the Counts of Blois we shall not pursue. They were succeeded by the family of Chatillon, and ultimately by Louis of Orleans, who began the first serious transformation of the castle. His widow, Valentine, lived for some time in the castle, and we are told she always kept her room hung with black in sign of mourning. During the war of the Hundred Years it was Dunois who held the castle, while Charles of Orleans, who was a better poet than he was warrior, was in captivity in England. It is from the date of Louis XII that the castle belonged to the Crown, and its story, therefore, is, as we have said, the story of France.

There are some charming verses of Charles of Orleans which seem to come from the castle of Blois and to describe it. They suggest that Blois was the first place for which he made after his release from captivity, and that is precisely what we should expect. One at least of these charming little poems was certainly composed at Blois, and is thought to have been the first lyric that Charles wrote after his return.

Joan of Arc came to Blois towards the end of April in 1429, acclaimed by the whole of the population, and she stayed there for three days. The standard which she had caused to be made at Tours was solemnly blessed in the church of St-Sauveur. It was from Blois that she sent her famous letter to the English army before Orleans, in which she announced her intention of driving them out of France. At Blois she appeared daily under the conduct of her chaplain, and the whole population joined

in hymns and spiritual songs, Joan herself every now and then on her knees in the midst of them; in fact, she held there a sort of mission in the style of Savonarola, making the men-at-arms to give up swearing and many other evil ways and to prepare themselves in the most solemn fashion for the great enterprise that was about to begin, for which, as she said, the help of Heaven was the first necessary. When the march to Orleans was begun, all Blois was at the very highest pitch of exaltation. It was on the 28th April that, armed all in white and riding on a black horse, she set forth, with an army of only six thousand men, and it was no doubt her inspiration which made this small force equal to raising the siege of Orleans.

It was at Blois in 1464 where Louis XI celebrated the betrothal of the young Louis of Orleans with the Princess Jeanne, only just born. This very early betrothal makes it fairly certain that the story popularized by Sir Walter Scott that Louis so betrothed his daughter because of her deformities is not likely to be true.

Louis XII, the Father of his People, held Parliament at Blois, and many important diplomatic meetings besides were held there. Anne of Brittany, as we know, was often alone at the castle of Blois, and there she held a little Court for men of literature, artists, and others. A great book was made of poems presented to the Queen by those of this little literary court, but most unhappily the manuscript itself, which had very beautiful miniatures and was in other ways wonderfully decorated, disappeared some time ago. It is said to have reached the Imperial Library of St. Petersburg, but what may have happened to it now is rather hard to say.

We have already spoken of the little pavilion that was built by Anne in the lower garden, a very charming and

beautiful little work of the Renaissance. It was not only Anne of Brittany who made Blois a literary centre; Louis XII collected there an immense library, the foundation of the great National Libraries of France. It was at Blois that Anne of Brittany died in 1514, after a very remarkable reign, twice a Queen and after exercising a very admirable influence upon her two husbands. She always remained a Breton, and what is called *la perche aux Bretons*, a small tower, is still shown in the castle.

Francis I, as we know, was a great builder. His schemes were always wildly extravagant, and while this may not have been very good for his people, at any rate it meant that his architects and masons were never starved of material. It is in justice to Francis to say that, extravagant as he was as a builder, he pulled together the general finances of the kingdom and left them in sound order for his successor.

The famous conspiracy of Amboise was originally meant for Blois. The Guises thought best that the King should be in a place of safety, and so the Court was moved hastily to Amboise.

There was another Parliament at Blois in the time of Henry III. Of this we have a vivid description, which it would be extremely interesting to give if space permitted. Things did not go as well with the Parliament as Henry had hoped.

But Blois is chiefly noted for the famous [1] murder of the Duke of Guise, who was practically a rival king. We find still in some of the rooms at Blois scratchings on the wall which suggest that everyone was divided into the Guise party or the King's party. At any rate, the King determined that the Guises must be removed, and most people know, or at any rate they will hear in

[1] Perhaps, rather, infamous.

full from the guides, the very grim story of this deliberate murder. It must be allowed that the Duke's own self-confidence had blinded him. We may say that he was one of those whom the gods first send mad and then ruin. The spot will be pointed out where, in Henry's own bedroom—though Henry himself was in his study next door—Guise actually breathed his last. We have every possible evidence that the murder was very deliberately and coldly planned, even to the extent of blocking an entrance to the upper rooms where the King lived, his own quarters being directly above those of Catherine de Médicis and almost an exact replica of them. The warnings given to the Duke of Guise are said to have been many. Notes were sent him in handkerchiefs and so on. It was all in vain, and there are few more sordid stories than that of the early meeting of the Council called by the King on pretext of his religious duties, the Duke of Guise hastening into the Council-room without having broken his fast, eating a few plums, of which he left some on the table and placed some in the little fruit-box which it was customary to carry about with one. It was with this box, a weak enough weapon, that he was able to fell one of his assassins.

Sordid and melancholy, too, is the story of the death of Catherine de Médicis, due, we are told, to a fever brought on by the reproaches of the old Cardinal of Bourbon, who had accused her quite openly of having brought both himself and the Guises, his nephews, to a violent death.

The guides will also point out the window of the castle from which Marie de Médicis made her famous escape. The story is well known. She was brave enough when descending from the window to the first platform, but she was not prepared to face the further descent. She

was let down, we are told, in a big cloak, which somehow was kept safe from the projecting rocks, and which brought her to the ground of the moat without accident. Both the walls and the moat are no longer in the state in which they were in her day, so that one cannot actually reconstruct the escape. Even when she was safe to the ground, all was not yet well. They could not find the carriage which had been arranged to meet her, and she had left behind one of her jewel-cases. Everything, however, was put right, and the flight—which was going to have very serious consequences for France—was safely accomplished.

It was in 1635 that Gaston of Orleans came to settle in the castle and began to reconstruct it. He had dreamt of destroying the whole building and starting it entirely afresh, but fortunately he did no more than build his own well-known wing. It would have been the greatest possible loss if we no longer possessed the two magnificent specimens of architecture of the earlier date.

At the castle of Blois one finds in some rooms the monogram of Louis and Anne de Bretagne, so that the national exclamation figures repeatedly in ceilings and over mantelpieces. The other royal monogram on which much discussion arises is that of Henri and Catherine de Médicis. Some people think it is really H and D, for Diane de Poitiers: obviously this is wrong, but Henri would experience a secret cynical joy in observing that it did equally well for both.

CHAPTER IV

CHAMBORD

THE two first thoughts that came into my head at Chambord were, first, that the poet was right who said that

> Unless they've souls that grovel
> Folks prefer in fact a hovel
> To your dreary marble halls—

and second, that it is well for the salamander that it was, if not a fabulous, at least a fairly rare, beast, since it would have certainly been heavily stoned at sight, so weary does one grow of it when on the track of Francis I.

Chambord marks the time when the monarchy was no longer feudal and when the Renaissance was just beginning to emerge out of the Middle Ages. It is not a fortress at all. It is, as we know from its actual history, a great pleasure-house, and it was no doubt placed where it is, in country which itself is a little bit dull, because it was a good place to hunt in, and the kings of those days, and especially Francis I, had a great deal of time to put away in some fashion or another. It was perhaps just as well that they spent so much time on the innocent amusement of hunting.

The interior of Chambord gives us, however, a general feudal appearance; that is to say, the arrangement of rooms is still in the old-fashioned style. The communi-

cation between them was by passages generally carved from the thickness of the walls, and by winding staircases which have reached their zenith of beauty and genius of construction in the great central staircase.

One may call Chambord the folly of Francis. It certainly gives at first sight an impression of wasted magnificence, but we cannot for a moment be anything but grateful to him or rather to his architects in leaving us so glorious a general view as that which one may have by looking across the river where the turrets and pinnacles and lanterns are grouped together in an almost Byzantine profusion. Chambord, moreover, has remained almost entirely unchanged. It certainly suggests what we know of Francis I, and seems actually to reflect his character.

We must not suppose that Chambord was never a place of warlike importance. We learn that the Master of Artillery of Charles of Orleans sent to Chambord some special defences, among which was a cannon throwing a more than four-pound cannon-ball.

It was in 1526, on his return from his captivity at Madrid, that Francis began to build Chambord. We shall see elsewhere that Francis had been somewhat pinched in his youth and that he was corrrespondingly lavish in all sorts of splendour when he actually came to the throne after his long time of anxious waiting. All his ideas were vast, not to say too vast. He wanted everything both solid and soaring. We are told that any amount of trouble was spent over the design of the castle ; models were made in wood ; but, once decided, Francis put into it an extraordinary zeal and passion. For twelve years nearly two thousand workmen were busy. The learned dispute, and will continue to dispute, whether the architect was French or Italian. Speaking

generally, we may be pretty sure that, though the châteaux of Touraine have considerable Italian influence, most of the work was by French masters. In fact, the architect has been recognized as a certain Pierre Trinqueau.

It is interesting to remember that Francis was at first satisfied with a splendid model, though nothing like as vast as the present building, but somehow the passion of building grew upon him and his great edifice grew correspondingly. That is why we have grouped round what is still called the keep the great wings, the galleries, and, to crown all, the great lantern. So vast was the work that all sorts of things went wrong and a good deal of reconstruction and harmonizing had to take place during the building. The charm of the double staircase at the present is that you may wait till the party of your char-à-banc has chosen by which side it will ascend, and then by taking the opposite side you arrive at the same destination far from the madding crowd. The great staircase is so beautifully open to the four sides that one gets the best possible view of its very charming features.

The four great halls that surround it were used for all sorts of representations, and it is certainly in one of them that the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* was played before Louis XIV and his Court. It was on 14th October, 1670, that the first performance of the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* was given, by Molière himself, three fellow-actors, and four actresses, among whom was Mademoiselle Molière. She took the part of Lucile. It was certainly a very bold step of Molière's, not only to write but also to perform before such an audience a comedy which most clearly seems to herald the Revolution. It is not here the nobility but the worthy old bourgeois whom

we find held up to a good deal of well-meant laughter, but certainly to a good deal of admiration as well. Molière was quite openly attacking the manners of the nobility themselves and the element of fraud and hypocrisy which one found among them.

The representation, we are told, was entirely magnificent. The hall which is usually pointed out as being the scene of this first representation is that which looks north. One can quite easily reconstruct the general arrangement of the room. Probably the less distinguished part of the Court would be actually on the great spiral staircase. One could hardly have a more wonderful setting. We know, of course, that this first performance fell completely flat. It was felt that it was neither comedy nor indeed what one might rightly call a play; it was simply ridiculous farce. Molière, we are told, was in absolute despair. Everything had been done that possibly could be done to please the royal playgoer; the actors had done excellently, and Mademoiselle Molière especially had excelled herself in the rôle of Lucile. The ballet had actually been composed under instructions from the King himself; but it was quite a failure. However, at the second representation, when there was just as much brilliance and when the King at first seemed to be just as bored with the whole performance, the King after supper turned to Molière and congratulated him before the Court: "You have never done anything yet," said he, "which pleased me more. Your piece is excellent."

The great tower that looks westward was finished by Catherine de Médicis, who was not, however, particularly fond of Chambord. The country round about it was very different indeed from the country she was accus-

tomed to in Tuscany, and that is why she always preferred to be as near as possible to the Loire and generally dwelt at Blois.

All visitors are shown the window in which Francis is supposed to have written his somewhat trite remark, probably from some popular song, "Toute femme varie," round which quite a little legend has grown.

The Emperor Charles V came to visit Chambord in 1539, when the nucleus of the castle—that is to say, the keep—had just been built. The Emperor was delighted with the work. It was, he said, a summary of all that human industry can do. Charles and Francis had already met at Aigues-Mortes, when the Emperor had regarded as legitimate the King's claims on the Duchy of Milan. He was now on his way through France to punish the people of Ghent. He was received magnificently, and Francis, whose ideas were more wild than ever, in the presence of so distinguished a visitor, actually suggested altering the bed of the Loire so that it came right up to the castle walls. Charles was foolish enough to approve, and we may be thankful that so absurd and costly an experiment was never tried.

It is from the terraces that one gets a most wonderful view of the upper buildings of the castle, especially the great lantern. One's first idea most certainly is that we have here architecture run wild. The best views of Chambord, without doubt, are those at an angle; if one gets the full line, with all its marvellous beauty of roof, it is none the less a little monotonous. Its detail is worth a great deal of study, especially the charming little turrets with their very gracefully disposed windows.

It was to encourage her son Charles IX in his love for the chase that Catherine brought herself every now and then to stay at Chambord. Charles himself was

anxious to complete—if one can use such a word—the building, but he had not the unlimited command of money that Francis, its founder, had possessed. As for Henry III, he only cared for Blois: but we find him at Chambord a short time in May 1575. Louis XIV, as we know, was there frequently, and there he held a kind of literary court, and there it was that Molière, as we have seen, played one or two of his comedies for the first time. The first was probably *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, in which Molière was already attacking the style called *précieux*.

The first performance of *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* was such a "frost" that Lulli, the chief actor, in despair, took to buffoonery and leapt into the orchestra; this comic relief, we are told, made good the failure of the play. If so, the Court of Louis XIV was easily bored, but more easily amused. The days of pails of whitewash were not as yet; otherwise one wonders what honours might not have been heaped on Lulli.

Chambord, in fact, was a pleasure-house, and it certainly suggests nothing of the old fortresses such as we find along the Loire.

At Chambord we hear a great deal about two rather strange persons, Stanislas of Poland and Maurice of Saxe. They need not detain us. Maurice of Saxe became a great popular character even before he had become famous by his victories. Chambord was given to him in exchange for the victory of Fontenoy, but there was still the victory of Rancoux to come. Most people know the legend of his last words—for it is probably no more than legend—"I have had a good dream."

In December of 1870 Chambord was in the hands of German troops.

CHAPTER V

TOURS

TOURS is clearly the best centre from which to see the Loire châteaux, though it oddly enough no longer possesses a castle of its own. It was always a place of the greatest importance in France, and for some time was practically the French capital. The Basilica of St-Martin, which contained the tomb of the saint, gave it a prestige that hardly any city in France could dispute. It was also a very great centre of art, and, whether in the museums or in some of the older houses, or in the architecture of its greater buildings, one can trace the complete history of the development of French Art.

The cathedral is a magnificent example of Gothic, save the top of its two towers, which are equally beautiful Renaissance work. It is in the cathedral that one finds the tomb of the two children of Anne of Brittany and Charles VIII, which was originally in old St-Martin's. There were four children buried there together, but the sculptured figures represent only Charles-Roland and Charles.

Of old St-Martin's is left very little—only the clock-tower of the twelfth century and the tower of Charlemagne of the same period. In its base is said to be the tomb of Luitgard, the third wife of Charlemagne, who died at Tours in 800. Then there is part of the

small cloister of Renaissance date. The new basilica of St-Martin has what is left of the tomb of St-Martin in the crypt. Old St-Martin's was ravaged and nearly wrecked by the Huguenots, and finally destroyed not so very long ago.

Tours is rich in beautiful old houses, especially in the neighbourhood of the Place du Grand Marché; in the Rue Briçonnet is the so-called house of Tristan l'Hermite, which is probably not Tristan's house but which, none the less, is almost of his period. Then in the Rue du Commerce is the beautiful Hôtel Gouin, but throughout the whole of the old town of Tours one can find not only beautiful individual houses but the most charming possible streets, where the irregularity of the houses and the way in which they seem to be falling each towards the other gives them an added beauty.

There are plenty of engaging walks round about Tours. One which I found especially pleasing was to Rochecorbon and back, taking the tram as far as Ste-Radegonde. This expedition can be enlarged as far as Vouvray, for which a tram leaves occasionally during the day.

At the terminus of the tram one is quite close to the church of Ste-Radegonde. One turns away from the river and finds a little church built right into the rock, and still keeping its apse and a little tower with arches of the twelfth century. Its chief entrance is of the Renaissance and is a very fine example.

Following the road past Ste-Radegonde, one comes to the entrance of the Abbey of Marmoutier, one of the first monasteries of the west, founded by none other than St-Martin. In the Middle Ages it was one of the most powerful of all France and had a great many daughter monasteries ranged under its care. It was

RUE DU GRAND MARCHÉ, TOURS

there that at the end of the eleventh century Pope Urban II preached the First Crusade. Its church is practically gone, but there are a good many interesting remains. There is a charming chapel, and in the cliff upon the left side there are tombs cut in the rock and also a small chapel to which one mounts by a winding staircase. This chapel is called that of the Seven Sleepers, and it is said that their tombs are to be found there still. A gallery from the chapel takes one to a little cell, whence again a staircase takes one to a cell which is that of St-Leonard, also cut in the rock. One can also visit a Gallo-Roman *cella* now dedicated to St-Patrick, and other chapel cells and so on, all cut from the cliff. At the foot is the cell of St-Brice, who was the successor of St-Martin.

The *abbé* used in the old days to live at the castle of Rougemont, which is at the top of the cliff. At the foot of this cliff also rises a tower which was both keep and bell-tower of the abbey. By the Loire is still the fine gateway, which is an almost perfect specimen of thirteenth-century building. It has a charming little turret in the form of a pyramid, with an open gallery round it.

Coming along the river from the abbey I struck upwards into the hills so as to pass the curious steps cut in the rock that are called, for some reason, the English staircase. Then, working my way along the cliff through charming vineyards, I found myself at Rochecorbon.

Rochecorbon itself, on which one drops suddenly, lies below the splendid vineyards for which it is justly famous. You come straight upon the fine little Romanesque church : I found the parish nightingale practising both on the organ and on her own *vox humana* for

Sunday's Mass. Of one thing you could be perfectly certain: that there would be no sort of hitch in the Sunday music. The steam-whistle voice of this excellent and reliable lady would carry the dullest village choir through anything. There may have been a vintage festival toward, since the statue of St-Vincent, patron of vineyards, had a fresh bunch of grapes in his hand. Anyhow, when I turned to go out, there was a notice bidding me shut the door carefully, and, for the sake of those who were without, I did so.

A quiet, peaceful, pretty little place. A church, a *mairie*, a post-office, a café, a *charcuterie*, and what more does man want here below?

I could not, alas! go up the valley and see the great tithe barn of Meslay. At Rochecorbon, on the cliff, is the famous "Lantern," or Watch Tower.

A visit to Plessis-les-Tours is extremely easy by the tram from the station to Porte Sainte-Anne and then a little walk on foot.

In the Rue de Plessis there are some good old houses, and through this street one reaches the remains of the castle. As many will know, there was an old castle at Plessis which Louis bought in 1463. Those who expect to find anything at all suggested by the famous description of Sir Walter Scott will be very much disappointed. Louis only built it as a kind of country house, where he lived his life as an ordinary citizen. None the less, he did to a certain extent strengthen and fortify it, but not in such a way as to give the impression of a feudal stronghold like Loches or Luynes.

There is very little of it left now.[1] It is in brick and in Gothic style, and, although the room is shown in which Louis is said to have died, it is quite possible that

[1] The interior is only shown to the medical faculty.

the wing that remains was only completed at the very end of his reign, or possibly actually after his death.

Not far off is the farm of La Rabaterie, of the same period, which is said to have been the manor of the famous barber Olivier Le Daim.

CHAPTER VI

ROUND ABOUT TOURS

Luynes

LUYNES is one of the easiest expeditions to make from Tours: it is a simple tram ride. It is also one of the most pleasing. One is allowed to wander at will in the precincts of the castle and on the walls. The little town itself, or village, is extremely charming, and one may walk out, if one has time, to the aqueduct at no great distance, which originally supplied the Roman settlement there.

The old name of Luynes was Maillé, and there was a castle there from the eleventh century onwards. One need hardly say that it fell into the hands of the Counts of Anjou and was destroyed by Foulques Réchin. It was rebuilt in 1106, and no doubt what one sees to-day is very largely of that epoch.

It was the lord of Maillé who sold to Louis XI his little estate inherited from his mother on which the castle of Plessis was built. The purchase-money was evidently spent in the strengthening and beautifying of Luynes. In the enclosure of the castle was built the very charming dwelling-house rather in the style of the royal castles.

The view one gets of Luynes from the street of the little town is extremely effective from any angle—its round towers are grouped very effectively when seen at

a distance, though the view from the south is perhaps the finest of all.

One can wander about in the moat and one is allowed to penetrate into the interior court, where is the charming residence, rather resembling Plessis.

Close by is the fine church of the canonesses, which was founded in 1486, a church with a single nave and with a doorway in the Flamboyant style that we find elsewhere on the banks of the Loire.

Loches

We have already seen that the interest in making a tour through the castles of the Loire lies largely in being able to see the progress from the great fortress feudal castle, first, to the strongest possible form as dictated by the requirements of new developments in artillery, and then gradually, as the kingdom became more peaceful and as the building art grew more and more expert, into a mere residence where the first thought was of convenience, amenity, and beauty.

I suppose we may say that Loches and Chambord represent the two extremes, for in Loches we still see the great fortress of mediaeval France. At Loches, moreover, the town is in complete harmony with the castle. We have, therefore, what we have in a lesser degree at Luynes, a perfect little picture of town and castle almost as it must have been in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries.

Loches is a Gothic town. It is completely dominated by the great fortress and by the magnificent church, quite unique in many respects in France, which stand upon its acropolis.

At Loches one has to produce backsheesh more often than elsewhere, and Scotsmen may well be excused the

repetition of their favourite exclamation. Down the steep winding staircase, after collection of the tips, I noticed the guide went last; presumably, if the tips have not been ample enough, he gives the nearest tourist a push.

The building of a castle of some sort at Loches began in very early times, because we are told by Gregory of Tours that there was some sort of castle in existence at the time when St-Eustache built his church at Loches, or at any rate very shortly afterwards. It was in 491 that St-Ours established himself with a few of his monks in certain grottos at Loches cut from the rock above which stood the old and original castle. Some people even think that the word Loches means a hollow or cavern cut in the rock; others are inclined to think that it is the same word as "loch," a lake; but there is no doubt that there were such caverns as one sees in abundance in passing through the Touraine country.

It is no use speculating as to what sort of a castle this early building at Loches, already in existence at the time of Gregory of Tours, may have been. We know, however, that Loches was one of the buildings of the great family of Foulques, and at the end of the ninth century we find that Loches belonged to Foulques the Red, who received it as part of the dowry of his wife Rosille.

From the end of the ninth century, therefore, Loches belonged to the Counts of Anjou. We hear nothing of Loches in the time of Foulques the Good. It descended to his eldest son Geoffrey, who, save, perhaps, his successor, Foulques the Black, was the greatest warrior of this warrior race.

Everyone who has travelled down or about the Loire is accustomed to hear again and again from the mouths

of the guides the name of Foulques the Black. He is one of those strange and terrible figures who seems more like some ancient legendary hero than a character of history. His life is summed up as consisting of forty-three years of fighting, eleven churches or monasteries founded, twelve towns surrounded with walls, eight great castles built, cruelty, assassination, loot, three pilgrimages to Jerusalem in expiation of his crimes: and one can only wonder that they seem to suffice his conscience. None the less, Foulques the Black remains a very great and remarkable figure of the eleventh century, who passed through the reigns of six kings and was as much distinguished by his splendour and his riches as by his crimes. In other words, he is himself a picture or epitome of that eleventh century in which he lived.

Loches was Foulques's chief base for all his wars and warlike operations. Its position, as we can see by looking at a map of the roads, is very strong indeed, and it formed a kind of sentinel to warn him of the approach of danger and a final refuge when the danger came.

We must feel fairly sure that it was Foulques the Black and none other who built the keep of Loches. His predecessor, Foulques the Good, dwelt in days of peace, while Geoffrey seems to have been very little at Loches, busied as he was in affairs of the Court or in distant battles. Foulques the Black, however, lived on his estates, and was a sort of king of his own territory.

We can compare the great keep at Loches with that at Langeais and that at Montbazon. They are without doubt earlier, but none the less we can find in the keep at Loches something to remind us of these great tenth-century buildings.

We cannot concern ourselves with the story of the Counts of Anjou, except so far as it throws light upon

the history of the castle. Foulques was succeeded by his son Geoffrey the Second, called the Hammer. It is said that his nurse was a blacksmith's wife. Geoffrey, like his father, was a warrior, and actually accomplished at length that conquest of Touraine that had been the one ambition of the life of Foulques the Black, capturing at St-Martin-le-Beau the Count of Blois himself. Geoffrey locked him up in the keep at Loches, and only let him loose again on the hardest possible terms. Tours, Chinon, Langeais, and all that the Count of Blois still possessed in Touraine passed into the hands of the Counts of Anjou.

At Geoffrey's death two nephews were left to fight out the succession, another Geoffrey, called Geoffrey with the Beard, and Foulques the Fourth, surnamed Le Réchin. It was Geoffrey who had been selected by his uncle to succeed to the domain, but it was Foulques the Fourth who was determined to have it. He managed to trap Geoffrey, and locked him up also in the Dungeon of Loches, where he kept him for thirty years, only giving him his liberty when he had become old and almost imbecile. There was nothing but fighting, oppression, and injustice.

We must leave this grim scene and find how it was that Loches came to belong to the Kings of England. Geoffrey with the Beard, while still in prison at Loches, had none the less plenty of adherents, in fact there was a definite attempt to free him with the help of Stephen of Blois. Foulques, apparently frightened at last, did homage to Stephen, and obtained by way of price the continued captivity of his brother. It was a happiness for everyone when Foulques felt that he was no longer capable of governing his vast domains, and he abdicated in favour of his son Geoffrey, whose mother had been

Ermengarde de Bourbon. We are glad to know that the first act of this young prince was to let his poor uncle out of prison, and the uncle, only too delighted, signed a document handing over all his rights in the County of Anjou.

It is a matter of ordinary history how the throne of England came into the hands of the Counts of Anjou. We all know the story of the *White Ship* and the loss of the young Prince William.

In 1152 Aliénor, the Duchess of Aquitaine, was entering her duchy and stayed a while at Blois, when the Count of Blois, Thibault the Fifth, cast his eyes not only upon the beauty of Aliénor but also upon her magnificent inheritance, and did his best to prevent her going farther and to force her to marry him. She managed to escape, and hastened to the protection of the Count of Anjou, passing through their territory to Aquitaine. Geoffrey was determined to succeed where Thibault had failed, and tried actually to kidnap Aliénor in her passage, but it was not Geoffrey but Henry, his elder brother, who ultimately became the husband of Aliénor and heir to her great duchy. So it was that the Counts of Anjou, not only Kings of England but Dukes of Normandy, were lords of the greater part of Western France and actually possessed more French provinces than the King of France himself.

This brought no peace to Loches, and in 1173 the castle was burnt. Henry, as we know, ultimately lost a great part of his possessions, was obliged to renounce those in the north, and was at Chinon when the treaty which set the seal upon his defeat was read to him. It is said that his heart was broken by finding that his son John was one of those most bitter against him. At any rate, a few days afterwards he fell ill at Chinon, died

there, and, as we know, was carried off to Fontevrault for burial. We are told that he died miserably, that the breath was hardly out of his body when his servants looted all his wardrobe and his jewels, so that it was only with great difficulty that they found a shroud in which to wrap him and only some poor cart was left to take his body to Fontevrault.

Loches was part of the ransom money raised by Richard to free himself from captivity in Germany at the hands of the Emperor Henry VI, and so it came back into the hands of the French King.

None the less, we find Richard leaving the castle to Berangère his wife, and John Lackland spends a great deal of time at Loches, which suffered siege from Philip in 1204. John was rightly named, and in a short time it had passed again into the hands of the French King, and this time it remained there.

We have already seen that the Keep was almost certainly built by Foulques the Black, or at the very latest by his son. All visitors to Loches will have been struck indeed by the strength and gloom of this great Keep, which has not suffered a great deal of re-building since its first days. It was admirably situated for the purpose to which it was later put—namely, as a great State prison.

The fifteenth century saw considerable additions to the Castle of Loches, chiefly the great round tower, from which in the old days one could pass by a small drawbridge around the ramparts of the north and so reach what was known as the royal castle, which was at the far end of the enclosure.

In the reign of Charles VI Loches itself was strengthened and surrounded with strong town walls. Charles himself was at Loches when in 1429 Joan of Arc came to

tell him of the deliverance of Orleans, and to urge him to make use of his success and to cause himself to be crowned truly King of France at Rheims.

It was from this time onwards that Loches became almost the regular State prison for the greater offenders. The Duke of Alençon was one of these. He had joined in 1456 in the revolt of the Dauphin and was condemned to death, but, none the less, his condemnation was remitted to imprisonment at Loches. It was a rigorous imprisonment. He was never to be without attendant, to speak to no one, to receive and write no letters, to have no money. He was only allowed a few books and a chess-board. It was Louis XI who freed him in 1461. It was Louis XI also who is said to have started the imprisonment of important prisoners in iron cages, the first, perhaps, for Antoine de Châteauneuf, the Lord of Lau. He was imprisoned not at Loches but at Ousson; but Louis writes to the admiral who was the governor of the castle and says that the prisoner is to be placed in an iron cage, of which he actually sent him the plan. Lau, none the less, at the end of two years contrived somehow to escape.

But the name that is always associated, as we are aware, with iron cages is that of the great bishop La Balue. It was under his advice that Louis XI met the Duke of Burgundy in that almost fatal interview at Péronne, so wonderfully described in *Quentin Durward.* Louis, as we know, managed to slip through, but he never contrived to forgive those who had advised the meeting. We are told that the people of Paris actually taught their parrots and their magpies to call the word "Péronne! Péronne!" and that Louis sent and seized all the talking birds of Paris and caused their necks to be wrung.

La Balue might have known that Louis could owe him no particular thanks for his part in the Péronne business. Unfortunately, he allowed himself to be mixed up in an affair with the Duke of Guienne, whom he is said to have advised by secret letters to insist entirely upon the terms made in his favour by the Treaty of Péronne. A letter was captured, La Balue was seized, and first placed in the castle of Tours and then in that of Onzain. He was tried, and taken to Loches, and placed in one of the cages which we are always told were invented by himself. They were probably invented by a brother bishop, the Bishop of Verdun, who himself inhabited one of them.

This was the beginning of a great many such imprisonments by Louis, and we find in his accounts a good many notes of expenses both for material and workmanship on these cages. At the same time, we must remember that they were not really iron cages at all but of wood, as we can see to-day at the Tour Fringall at Thouars, strengthened outside with bands of iron. They were square, six feet and a half all round but only five and a half feet in height. There was, as we can still see in such examples as have been left, a little hole by which food was handed through to the prisoner, and there were elementary arrangements for the prisoner's washing. One of the Loches cages was still there in 1790, and a considerable stir was made about it, a demand being proffered that it should be destroyed as a relic of barbarism. It is possible that the cage of La Balue was actually in the big hall of the tower and not where the guides point out at the present day.

Another celebrated prisoner at Loches was Philippe de Commines. He had been a favourite of Louis XI, as we know, but he was a natural-born intriguer, and

the regent, Anne of Beaujeu, caused him to be arrested, with others, and shut in the usual prisoner's cage. We hope that the inscription which is attributed to him is really his work. It will be found at the top of the staircase of the tower: "I am sometimes sorry to have spoken, but never to have kept silence."

Perhaps the most picturesque of the prisoners of Loches is Ludovic Sforza. He was, as we know, a *parvenu*, but reached the ducal throne of Milan. He was captured by Louis XII at the battle of Novare, and he was treated as an enemy of State and also as a personal enemy of the King. Traitor he may have been, but without any doubt he was a man of great qualities, and he was thoroughly fitted to be a great prince. We know, if we have been to Milan, how much he enriched the city with the works both of Leonardo and of Bramante. We know also that at Novare we find the canal still called by his name which has done so much for the provinces both of Novare and of Lomelline. He was a kind of Mæcenas to a court of poets, men of science and artists. He managed to escape from his first prison, that of Pierre-Encise, by the simple and well-known device of hiding in a hay-cart, but his liberty was no use to him, as he did not know his way about, and he was very soon captured again, taken to Loches for greater security, and shut up in that prison which still bears his name there. In this dark and damp cell, where the light only enters by a window of three feet square, he managed to put away his abundant leisure in painting. How he ever accustomed his eyes to see in that gloom we can hardly tell, but paint he did, and we can still see the results upon the damp walls. With his paintings he also mingled inscriptions. One of the more famous, a quotation from Dante, that

> . . . a sorrow's crown of sorrow
> Is remembering happier things,

is in the room above the drawbridge, but probably the words are from Sforza's own hand.[1] It is a very curious thing that all the inscriptions which are attributed to him are in French and not Italian. His imprisonment was a long one, but he was not always in this dark cell. We are told he was given a sort of liberty under the guard of certain Scottish soldiers. We find traces of him in a room in the round tower, as the inscriptions there are evidently from the same hand as those in the dungeon. Among them we find the strange symbol "Sau San," which has puzzled antiquarians and students from his day to this.[2]

He died at length in 1508, and his will can be seen in the archives at Milan. As for his tomb, we no longer know where it is to be found, but it was certainly somewhere in the great collegiate church close by, perhaps at the foot of the great crucifix which was formerly at the entrance to the choir.

One could hardly believe, on visiting the prison of Sforza, that there are yet lower prisons to be found, but one can descend to the prison of the *oubliette*, as it is called, though there is little doubt that it was not the *oubliette* of tradition, or such as is described by the guides. Probably these curious hollows or excavations originally had to do with the quarrying of stone, and then were

[1] The famous lines of Dante quoted above are an echo of Boëthius. Dante of course might have made the observation unaided by any previous writer, but there are well-known references to the great work of Boëthius in Dante's *Convito* and also in the *Divina Commedia*.

[2] It may be *sau* or *sav*. Were not Sforza's French so good elsewhere, one might think it was a little symbol of triumph. *Sauf et sain*—as much as to say, "They haven't killed me, or my reason, yet, in spite of all."

used for communicating between the different stages of these underground prisons.

Another prisoner of whom the guides will make a great deal is the Count of Saint-Vallier, the father of Diana of Poitiers. The moving story which the guides will tell is unfortunately not quite correct. Though he was certainly imprisoned there, he was transferred to Paris and was there condemned to death. We know the strange story: how he fell ill, and the date of the execution was postponed from time to time, and when it arrived the King pardoned him at the last moment. Romance may make whatsoever it pleases from this story.

During the great wars of religion Loches became once more, as it had been in the old days, a kind of outpost of Poitou. It was captured by the troops of Condé, but not held by them for long.

Another famous prisoner was the Duke of Elbeuf, after the assassination of his cousin of Guise at Blois, but he was not imprisoned in the castle itself. He lived there, probably in the house which is now the Sub-Prefecture, with his daughter, and they were very commonly godfather and godmother to the children of Loches, as we find in the baptismal registers.

The history of Loches is by no means done, but throughout the whole of that history it is a place of gloom. It somehow brings to us nothing but memories of war, mourning, oppression, misery. We are glad to be able to record at least one escape from Loches. It was in the year II,[1] and we are told that a certain Réné Fontaine escaped by a passage-window, fell into the court where stands a well, somehow got to the tower and seized there a ladder, mounted by the ladder to the window of the little tower which looked on the garden

[1] Of Revolution date.

belonging to one Morinet, worked his way along a vine, fell on to a projection of the little tower, and then, using the vine of another neighbour, fell into the cemetery. However, he did not remain there, but was picked up by some of the neighbours, who heard his cries, and carried him on the bier which was standing handy in the cemetery safe to hospital.

There are plenty of interesting inscriptions at Loches. Those of Ludovic we have already considered, though it is impossible to suggest any reasonable explanation of his curious mystic symbol "Sau San." There are inscriptions in Catalan and in Greek. Most are, of course, in French and Latin. One is in English: it is only a name.

A good study has been made of these wall-scratchings or *graffiti* of the prisoners, both at Loches and elsewhere. One nearly always finds these also in any guard-room, especially in the embrasure of the windows. It is always worth looking for them; often whitewash and plaster have obscured them. In the guard-room of Jeanne d'Arc's Tower at Chinon are several; one of these appears to me to be in German—*sschandung*—perhaps some mercenary, or someone in the suite of the Emperor Charles V, wrote this up.[1] There are always a good many heraldic and religious symbols.

The magnificent collegiate church of St-Ours at Loches is without doubt one of the finest structures of all Touraine. It is remarkable for the two great pyramids which stand between the towers and which form the roof of the nave. The porch is one of the very finest of all the Romanesque porches of Poitou and Touraine, and the capitals of the pillars are also particularly

[1] Some authorities say that these *graffiti* are by the Templars who were in prison there.

wonderful, but the chief feature of the interior is of course these unusual pyramids, which give an air of great height to the nave roof. There is a crypt, recently discovered, which goes back at least to the twelfth century. There are still a good many traces of painting on the walls, but the only complete picture is that of St-Brice, the successor of St-Martin, which is still in very good order. The crypt is very dark, but by the light of the portion of candle which was handed to me I was able to assure myself that beneath this painting of St-Brice there is certainly some earlier form of picture, or possibly rough incision, probably of the same subject, and in the short time that I was able to spend there—though I made more than one visit—I was fairly certain that I saw traces also of very ancient inscriptions. If so, beneath this painting at least, and perhaps elsewhere, there may be something going back to possibly the fifth and sixth centuries. The guide was very much distressed when I pointed out my supposed discovery, and seemed to think that I was trying to urge that the paintings themselves should be scraped away, but I must hope that others, who perhaps have longer time to spend in the crypt, may be able to verify my suggestion.

Students know that it is in this church that the tomb of Agnès Sorel was originally built, but it has now been moved to the Tour d'Agnès, and extremely beautiful it is. It fills the little chapel, lighted by two stained-glass windows, and the whole effect is particularly moving. The face has been restored partly with plaster, but none the less one can see that it is beautiful. As one reads her epitaph, one is glad to know how kind she was to the poor, and at least it is certain that her influence with the feeble Charles VII was always on the side of good.

CHAPTER VII

THE LESSER CHATEAUX

Chenonceaux

ONE naturally thinks together of Chenonceaux and Chaumont, remembering the "chop, swop, barter, or exchange" made by Catherine de Médicis with Diana of Poitiers—a compulsory "swop" for Diana. Beautiful and powerful women may well have coveted it, for Chenonceaux is generally called the "Woman's Castle," imagined and planned as it probably was by the better, and not the worse, half of the Bohiers. The worse half provided enormous sums of money, and no doubt a great deal of the taste, since he travelled (and indeed died) in Italy, and was a keen observer of artistic things.

The castle—no castle really, but a charming domestic pleasure-house—is built, as everyone knows, over a river, and its chief, though not its oldest, feature is Diana's bridge-gallery. Inside are the rooms both of Diana and of her rival Catherine.

It fell into the hands of François I and, at his death, of Diana. Catherine held there the celebrated fêtes of 1559, nominally in honour of François II and Marie Stuart. Among the grim Loire castles, Chenonceaux is happy indeed in having little history, though the Revolutionaries caused a good deal of its priceless contents to be destroyed.

Chaumont

Chaumont stands magnificently on a little promontory of the Loire. It is a solid enough structure, not over-ornamented, but certainly impressive. It came, as we know, into the hands of Catherine de Médicis, but only (it seems) in order to make an exchange already ratified with Chenonceaux. It is not so severe inside the courtyard, where there is some charming Renaissance work. The rooms are good, and the brief association with Catherine de Médicis has been "run for all it is worth;" there is, in fact, a good Catherine museum there, and intimate possessions of hers (her *prie-dieu*, for instance) are shown.

We do not know if the room shown as Diana's was really hers. Diana did not long have the opportunity of making the best of a bad bargain, though she did, of course, certainly live here, as Catherine perhaps did not.

Diana is, of course, one of the most interesting figures of the Loire. It is sometimes forgotten that she was of quite high birth (as was Agnès Sorel); she was no Arlette. She was ambitious indeed, and knew that money meant power.

Jallanges

It is well to remember that it is not only the great castles to which the autocars run which are worth visiting along the Loire or along the rivers which run into the Loire. There is, for instance, Jallanges, which one reaches from Vernou, which is not far from Vouvray. This castle is not rich in history, but many of these minor buildings which did not play any great part in the very troublesome history of mediaeval France are just for that reason more interesting. They seem to preserve better the simple types of domestic architecture, and

come rather as a welcome relief either from the severity of Loches or the over-elaboration of Chambord.

The front of this castle, which faces the courtyard, is very pleasing, being of brick and stone. Bricks in different shades of red are used, and as a result one gets a curious diaper pattern; in fact, one wants to go to the minor castles of the Loire and its district to understand how much can be done with very simple architectural devices and yet with what splendid and beautiful results. There is a very pretty sculptured doorway of the tower which stands in the middle of this front. The other side of the house is by no means so ornamental.

Réaux

Another castle, also built in dark-red brick and stone arranged in a symmetrical pattern, and almost reminding us of the camouflages of which one saw so much in the War, is the castle of Réaux. This castle was probably at one time a great deal larger than it is now. It has the charm, shared by Chenonceaux and the Castle du Moulin, of standing near or on a moat. There are the remains on the side of the moat of a building destroyed during some attack, so the castle at Réaux obviously did not come through the troublous times of France scot-free.

Montreuil-Bellay

Montreuil-Bellay has the charm of giving us three castles in one place, so that one can kill there at least three birds with one stone. Moreover, of all the kitchens in this part of France, perhaps of all the old kitchens in France, that at Montreuil-Bellay is the finest. It stands, of course, apart, as kitchens did, from the castle itself, but while most kitchens, like

that at Fontevrault, are polygonal, this one is square. It has two fireplaces, and it had a third in the centre of the building.

Of the three castles, one is perhaps not strictly a castle. It is the little castle used as a residence by some of the canons who dwelt in the collegiate church. It was to them, therefore, that this fine kitchen belonged.

One will sometimes find, on going to any of these smaller castles, that one is not welcome in the grounds or that one may only see the exterior. This need not cause any distress. The interiors are often beautiful, but unless they have work from other and larger castles —as one finds at Fontenay—there is often no particular reason why one should spend time over them; but this is not true of Montreuil-Bellay, whose rooms and interiors generally are particularly fine. They are very highly coloured, and perhaps the colouring is slightly overdone. There is also, in the new castle, a very fine staircase, built, like that of Amboise, on such a gentle gradient that you could mount to the top of it on a horse. The general setting of Montreuil-Bellay is particularly beautiful, and it is well to take a boat on to the Thouet and get a general view of church and castles from the river.

Montrésor, Montbazon, and Villandry

Another of the lesser castles, which, however, has played its part in the history of France, is Montrésor, at no very great distance from Loches. It possibly has got nothing to do with a treasure, but may mean "the mountain with triple fortifications," and it certainly has, or had, such a triple line. This is one of the very old castles, or at any rate one on a very old foundation indeed. It must have been begun somewhere in the

early twelfth or eleventh century. It, too, is celebrated for its interiors, but the general view of the castle across the Indrois is quite magnificent, enough to satisfy those who only want exteriors. There is the more modern portion standing fronting the river, with the ruins of the old castle to your right.

Among ruins there are very few so completely picturesque as the square keep of the Castle of Montbazon. Here we have a genuine piece of tenth-century work. On the top someone has put a bronze statue of the Virgin, which in one way, of course, is by no means suited to the general architecture of the tower, but it does most distinctly rivet the eye as one passes it on the way to Loches.

Then there is Villandry on the Cher, to reach which one will pass, or from which one may go to, the famous dripping caves of Savonnières. The village, which is near the caves, is very interesting, and has a fine entrance to its church.

Cheverny and du Moulin

Cheverny is a little (but earlier) bit of Richelieu town or of Versailles. Its front is rather too icily regular and splendidly null. Its back or garden front is more charming. The interior is remarkable for its decoration, whether of the Don Quixote paintings —more interesting, I thought, than beautiful or exactly worthy of their great theme—or of the pretty flower-panels with their Latin mottoes, which puzzle visitors and Loire historians, but are fairly simple to anyone whose knowledge extends on the one side to a little botany and on the other to a little mythology. The "King's Room," which one finds in nearly all castles, is quite fine, and is nearly all of its period.

Cheverny lies in the dull Sologne district, which can be made healthier and pleasanter (and is gradually being made so) by afforestation of pine-trees. Not far from Cheverny is the very picturesque du Moulin castle—one of the most picturesque of all the Loire district (it lies towards Romorantin, the chief Sologne centre, still distinguished by a notable dialect and some respectable—some also, I regret to say, not too respectable—folklore.

The Castle of du Moulin—the old builder's name—is in two pieces, of which one stands on the moat, with a bridge, and is very graceful and pleasing. The other part, though from some angles it has a slightly "sky-scraper" appearance, is also fine; it is really the manor-house, standing behind the castle proper. It is in brick, as is the greater part of the castle, and has beautiful rooms, a fine old kitchen, and a dignified chapel, remarkable for a statue (earlier than the building) of Ste-Catherine. The castle, having fallen into good hands, is in good order, and has been restored to its original shape as far as possible—partly with the aid of a fresco in the family chapel at Lassay.

Ussé

Ussé took a lot of getting to. But once there, every prospect pleased, including the prospect, and the retrospect, of lunch at the little inn. Here we fell right into the feudal system; no nonsense about liberty, fraternity, and equality. The artist was like to have been wheeled off, like Mr. Pickwick at the orders of Captain Boldwig, to the Pound—nay, I am not sure that he was not in danger of being suspended on a *lanterne*. He was sketching (what will not these artists do?) on forbidden ground.

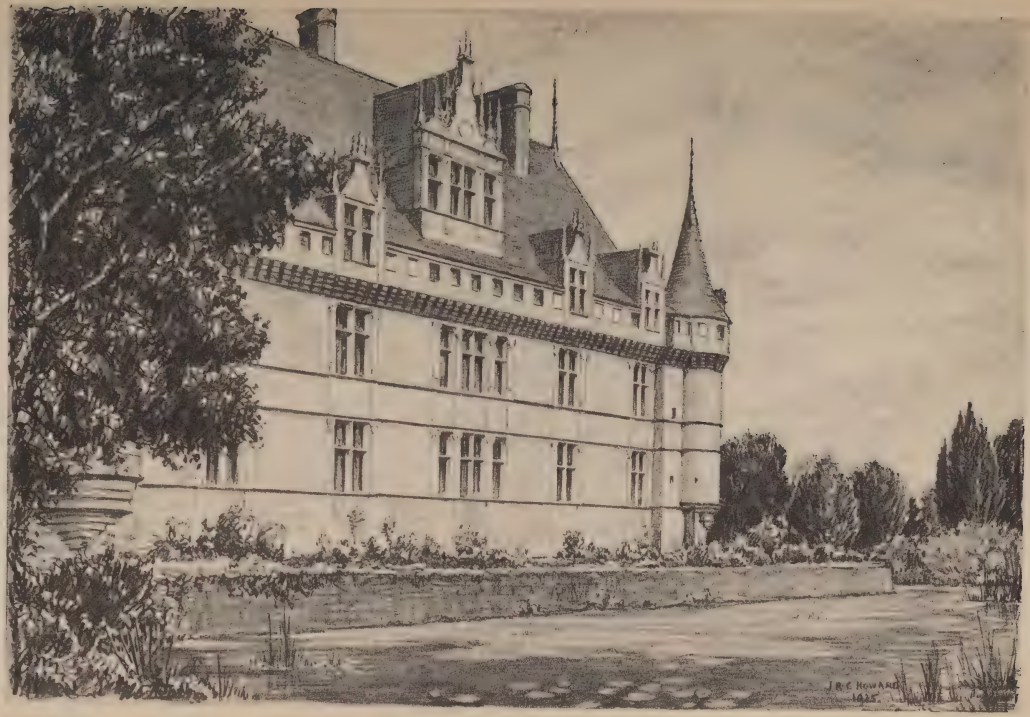
The castle of Ussé is particularly imposing from whichever angle one sees it. The inner court is no doubt the best piece of work, but its very best group of flanking towers, as one approaches it up the ordinary drive or as one sees it from the distance, makes it one of the most impressive of all the castles of Touraine. One does not as a rule see much more than this inner court and the quite beautiful chapel.

It is supposed that the grounds of the castle were partly laid out by the great Vauban, to whom we are said to owe the terraces. There was certainly a link between Vauban and the castle, since his daughter was married to one of the family of Valentiny who then possessed it. Vauban probably did something towards enlarging the castle, as it had been reconstructed in the sixteenth century, but it is not altogether likely that the terraces are really of his erection.

The chapel stands by itself, and is in the Flamboyant style, built somewhere about 1530. Inside, there are some very fine stalls, and a charming gallery, as well as a genuine Lucca della Robbia.

Azay-le-Rideau

The castle of Azay belongs now to the Beaux Arts, and has been made into a rather interesting museum. It is one of the most regular of the castles, though the monotony of the façade is broken by a very beautiful Renaissance tower and charming windows of the same period. Like Chenonceaux, the Château du Moulin, and others, it is on the edge of a little lake, and one gets very pleasing views across the water. The interior is noted for its fine staircase, of which the vault is especially good, and is decorated with the portraits of kings and queens of France. One finds, of course,



THE CHATEAU, AZAY-LE-RIDEAU

the usual traces of royal possession—the salamander, the ermine (which was the badge of Claude of France), and elsewhere the scutcheon with the letters "F. C." (Francis and Claude).

In the park is a little chapel, and in the village adjoining the castle is a very ancient church indeed, with curious triangular decoration on the front going back probably to the ninth century, but with statues of the eleventh century set into niches on either side and above the doorway. This little front is certainly one of the most remarkable to be seen in the whole of Touraine.

Langeais

Langeais is perhaps best known to history as having been the scene of the marriage of Charles VIII and Anne of Brittany. It is not possible to say in which of the big halls of the castle this marriage actually took place, but the guides, at least, have little doubt upon the subject.

Langeais was certainly built in an ancient Roman settlement, and we are told by St-Gregory of Tours that St-Martin founded a church there in the fourth century, which is the parish church of to-day. One can see some very ancient work still in its walls, although the church on the whole suffered very seriously by the love of reconstruction.

In the early Middle Ages it was very rarely that you had a church without a castle to protect it. It is probable, therefore, that there was some castle there as early as the date of the church, but, whether there was or not, the famous Foulques Nerra, who built so much along the banks of the Loire, built a fortress at Langeais also. The fine old ruin in the park is possibly

before the date of Foulque, although he seems to have altered it in the direction of very Early Gothic.

Langeais seems to have belonged to Eudes the First, Count of Touraine, who enters also into the history of the castle at Blois, but it certainly returned to the family of Foulques and belonged in about 1044 to the son of Nerra, Geoffrey. When the Kings of England became Counts of Anjou, the castle fell into the hands of Richard Cœur de Lion, but in the reign of Philip Augustus it went back into the possession of the French Crown.

Langeais is interesting in every possible way. It forms a magnificent group with its round towers and its sturdy-looking façade. Between two of these towers we still see quite clearly the arrangement for working the drawbridge. As it stands to-day it is, with the exception of the old keep in the park, practically as it was constructed to the order of Louis XI by Jean Bourré, who was the King's secretary and among other things was Governor of Langeais. We can see quite clearly resemblances between this castle and the castle of Plessis-Bourré, which he also built. The interest of Langeais, therefore, is that we have it practically complete and in its original state. It is in three parts, and its irregularities are due to the nature of the ground on which it is built. The keep of the castle, which is rectangular, was of course the last resort in case of siege, and, as is usually the case, gives access both to the ramparts and also to the open country. It was only joined to the rest of the building by a battlemented wall. The third section of the castle, running east to west, is still incomplete, and we are at liberty to speculate upon the actual plans of Bourré's architect. Some have thought that he intended to run it out so

as to join the remains of Foulques' original fortress. The breaking off of the work was evidently due to want of money. In the reign of Charles VIII money had to be subscribed largely to the support of the Italian War. It is possible that in causing it to be built Louis XI had an idea that it would form an outpost to his castle of Plessis.

It was the union of Brittany and France, which actually took place within the walls of Langeais, that gave a new security to this part of the kingdom, and from now onwards no great fortress was really necessary. There are, therefore, at least two reasons for the incompleteness of Langeais.

Like so many of these castles, its outside gives the impression of a great feudal castle, while within it is the residence of a rich citizen. It is this constant contrast between outside and inside of the castles, as seen especially at Luynes, that makes them so particularly interesting and charming.

In the great hall where the marriage of Anne of Brittany is said to have taken place there is a very beautiful chimney-piece, though that is not itself as beautiful as the chimney of the Salle des Gardes, upon which we find carved a complete castle, with its ramparts and battlements all complete.

The venerable tower of Foulques—though, as we have seen, it is probably earlier than his date—is thought by some people to have been of the Gallo-Roman period, but most authorities place it, as we have seen, about the tenth century.

CHAPTER VIII

THE POITEVIN PLAIN

Niort and the Fens

I BEGAN my more southern wayfaring at Niort, a little town in the big Poitevin plain, which at first sight has not a great many attractions, and in any case I would hardly suggest a very long stay. None the less, it has its great interest as a big centre both of the plain and of the fen district. It has a large open space, the Place de la Brèche, which has the charm of being perfectly open and is obviously an excellent place for fairs or any big shows. What the guide-books call its "principal centre of animation" really is at the end of this Place, where it opens into the Rue Ricard. It is indeed very animated and very noisy, and in the hot weather exceedingly dusty. About seven o'clock the animation ceases and the Place becomes rather dull, but, at the same time, very peaceful; one only hears the constant squealing of the swifts.

Its chief attraction, perhaps, is its old town hall. People call it—but no doubt wrongly—the old Palace of Eléonor,[1] but it is a perfectly charming building—not very old, dating perhaps from 1530, in a very delightful Renaissance style. There was an old Hôtel de Ville upon its site earlier. The belfry is later. Inside there is quite an excellent museum of antiquities.

[1] Or Aliénor.

On the ground floor there are a large number of Renaissance fragments, some of which come from the Abbey of Maillezais. There is also a white stone statue of Cardinal Richelieu. Above there is a good deal of interest of the ordinary rather miscellaneous kind which one finds so commonly in these museums, but the best part of the museum is certainly the stones on the ground floor.

One of one's occupations in Niort is to hunt for the place in which Madame de Maintenon was born. Some people say that she was born in the "Dungeon" or keep, where one room certainly bears traces of having been the prison where prisoners, and possibly the d'Aubignys, were shut up. This room is on the second floor of the north tower; but wiser people say that in all probability the prisoners were housed in the town, and at the end of the Rue Victor Hugo there is a quite delightful old house known as the Maison de Candie, which also disputes the honour with the Dungeon. As so often happens, the honour really probably belongs to a third party, as it is likely that the political prisoners were detained at the Hôtel Chaumont in the Rue du Pont.

It took some courage to penetrate into the courtyard of the Maison de Candie, which I found belonged to a corset-shop in the Rue Victor Hugo. It required a good deal more courage to enter this shop, which was one mass of corsets; but the proprietor was so particularly kind and obliging that I beg all lady readers to go and buy one (or does one say a pair?) without fail.

It is a charming façade, that of the old mansion, and in a dark doorway a pretty graceful little girl was doing her hair.

Near the Sèvre is a completely charming old shop, inhabited by a cobbler. I cannot help thinking it Roman; it is like the Roman[1] shop at Nîmes, if not so large. You do your business with the cobbler through the old arch. I saw another in Poitiers, in the Rue des Trois Rois. The corner where this Niort shop stands is an awkward one. I fear the shop itself may soon be pulled down—but let us hope not.

The keep itself is very impressive. It stands right over the river and must have been a very strong fortification and a very serious barrier to anyone who wanted to enter the town from the Sèvre. It really is the remains of a big château of the Counts of Poitiers.

Part of the keep has been turned into a museum, not so magnificent a museum as one finds, for instance, at Arles, but none the less quite a good representative collection of everything that has to do with the ordinary home-life and the farm-life of Poitou. I shall speak later of the customs, folklore, and so on, of Poitou.

What I suppose would attract the tourist most in this museum is the large case showing all the different kinds of coifs and the models of the babies tucked away in baskets or hung up on slings.

A visit to the market brings one into a perfect orgy of coifs, the best kind are a sort of mortar-board, only worn square and not at the angle. The flat surface is sometimes very beautifully embroidered. Widows or others in mourning wear a little black tassel or string that comes from the top to the centre. I never remember seeing so large a collection of women with long beards!

Niort also boasts a very fine church, and its spire can be seen across the plain for a very long way. The

[1] I think it to be Roman: the arcade is most ancient.

church was chiefly built during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and the spire was added about 1500. There are some interesting tombs in the church and some fine Aubusson tapestries. There is another museum at Niort besides that in the keep, but I shall not trouble to describe it in detail. There are quite a number of respectable pictures.

One of the best and most charming excursions to be made from Niort is to the fens. These are formed by the flooding of the Sèvre, and the result is a positive network of canals. Everybody lives in boats, and the boat serves not only for carting the hay but also as the hearse for a funeral.

I went out to the fen country on an autobus, the top of which was littered with baby-carriages and bicycles, but we got out somehow to Coulon, where I arranged at once for a boat. There was considerable doubt whether one would find anything to eat at Coulon, but, take it all in all, it is very difficult indeed to be adventurous in France. I use the word "adventurous" in the sense of missing an occasional meal. I have managed to get extremely hungry in various parts of Europe, and indeed have almost fainted with hunger in Austrian forests, but somehow in France, however adventurous you may set out to be, you ultimately end in lunch. People come and gently waft you in to some perhaps unsatisfactory-looking inn, where, nevertheless, you find that they understand very wonderfully the art of cooking. In the little place in which I landed up there did not seem to be much prospect of food, but they produced an enormous lunch, with two *pièces de résistance*, and I could hear muttered reports in the kitchen that the wild Englishman was on the whole behaving himself quite well.

After lunch I set off in my boat, which was paddled, and occasionally poled, by a worthy old man, who appears to be a boatman belonging to the Syndicat d'Initiative of Niort. This was one of the most beautiful excursions I have ever made. We were some hours going to and from under beautiful leafy avenues where everything was green. The very stream itself was green on the top. The only things that broke the green backgrounds were the beautiful steely-blue dragon-flies, different species of slightly different colours and sizes, and it was worth going there to see the dragon-flies alone.

All round the edges of the canals are grown poplars and ashes. The poplars grow there very rapidly indeed, and after twenty years their growth is enormous. They are cut down, and, strangely enough, are used only—or chiefly—in the bakers' ovens. The ash, which, as Spenser said, "is for nothing ill," is apparently cut down for use in the kitchen.

People always compare any water-ways with those of Venice. Here there is no basis of comparison at all, but it was very much more peaceful than Venice can ever be—no motor or steam-boats rushing hither and thither upon the lagoons. The only visible movement was the occasional pulling in of a fishing-line and the casting again of the float, for on Sunday, in the fens, everything that can stand on its legs from two years upwards has a fishing-rod. The only sound was the rhythmical sound of the paddle, and after a time one somehow ceased to hear that.

Besides the dragon-flies that darted hither and thither, there was joy in watching the water-spiders. I guarantee that anyone who, having lunched reasonably, sallies out in the punt upon the fens of the Sèvre, if he be

THE SÈVRE AT DAMVIX

provided with reasonable tobacco to ward off the flies, will at once forget all care.

It was a bad fishing day, and I learnt, I suppose, twenty different expressions, and perhaps a hundred gestures in fishermen's language, all meaning "Nothing at all." Every now and then one had to lie flat in the boat to scrape under some log or fallen tree. The water was green, the trees were green, and the very light was green. It was indeed a place for "green thoughts in green shades."

CHAPTER IX

POITEVIN COSTUMES AND CUSTOMS

THE museum in the keep at Niort is at least a move in the right direction, and just in time, for the old things are disappearing with lamentable rapidity. The collection appears inadequate when one compares it with the Museon Arlaten and other ethnographical collections. But, none the less, there it is—to be added to, we must hope, by generous bequests of private collectors. In another part of Poitou I was privileged to see an admirable private collection, genuinely collected, by painstaking care and zeal, by a student of "bygones" of no especial wealth or education. Possibly there is not a great deal of money to spare for these public regional museums; but we must be grateful that they are at least begun, and we can also rest happy in the thought that the French are thoroughly alive to the interests of bygones, and are, as a rule, excellent archæologists and antiquarians.

As is right and proper, a good space is given to agricultural implements, as used both in the Plain and in parts of Gâtine. Among those which are especially interesting, because of their oddness, at least to strangers, are the sickles with teeth like a saw, the flails, various tools used in the vineyards, farmyard gates, and ploughs simpler than that of Virgil. The old cottages and smaller farmsteads of Poitou have separate dwellings or man and beast (this is not so everywhere). They

are generally pretty solid, stone and lime being found fairly easily. In the Bocage one finds hard granites, and the building is often rough. Generally the entrance door leads straight into the main room, which is kitchen, living-room, and bedroom combined. Usually there are two large wooden bedsteads, one in each of the farther corners. All is neat beyond words. Often there are very fine fireplaces or chimney openings, hung about with glowing pots and pans. The upper room will possibly be used as a barn. There may be a second ground-floor room opening out from the first, but not very often; and sometimes you descend a few steps to the floor of the main room, on entering. Farms seem to suggest that they began as squares or rectangles, but, as further out-buildings were needed, they have become irregular. In the fens there are certain peculiarities, which unhappily make for less picturesqueness than elsewhere; farms and their buildings tend to be all in a line. By compensation one finds odd little huts built by the side of the canals or "lodes."

Roofs are commonly tiled; even in places where some sort of slate is found, they do not seem to use slate roofs. The people are passionately fond of white-wash, and one finds, to one's deep sorrow, beautiful old timber and brick houses smudged over and spoiled by a whity-grey surface coating.

Furniture is not ample nor varied, but what there is seems solid and good. The bed was, and often is, of the box type, with a step, acting as a sort of chest (its top being a lid) by which you climbed up into your bed. Mattresses would be straw or of maize-leaf (these are the more comfortable, and I rather think the leaves are slightly scented). Sheets are of that delightful coarse linen which makes one (however unjust) sleep the sleep

of the most just. There are curtains, and sometimes a canopy, where there is not a wooden tester. Occasionally you see a bed which may have come from some great house, or which has been copied from some lordly model. These will have fluted columns supporting the tester.

Cupboards are not as fine as in Normandy; and occasionally (but rarely) there are chests only, and no cupboards; these chests usually unornamented and with the usual little drawer or compartment on the top. Cupboards have generally double doors and a carved cornice.

Tables are big and heavy. There are also, of course, dressers for the dishes, and hutches for the food; but I saw none of the pleasing *panetières* which one finds in Provence. There was not much, in olden days, in the way of chairs; sometimes one sat upon the salt-box; but chairs are, of course, coming in now. In the chimneys are the ordinary simple iron arrangements for hanging the roast, or the pot, at the proper height. Candlesticks and lamps were (and often are) very primitive.

A necessary article of furniture was the basket, or the sling, in which the baby was left when it was *de trop*. I sadly fear we must regard both of these "dumb nursemaids" as having been rather cruel. It is true that, the baby once being there, the busy mother with her house to red up, her cooking, her chickens, and her beasts, had to make it her first consideration how to be well rid of it during her working hours. But the wretched infant, dumped in a round basket, like a large hot-water cosey, its little arms just projecting above, as if it were swimming for its life in some sort of lifebelt, must have been gruesomely uncomfortable. There are also slings, just holding the baby up; and there are

various forms of "baby-walks" like those occasionally to be found in our own cottages.

Cradles can be very primitive indeed. Usually, of course, the box in which the baby lay would swing like a modern cradle, worked by the mother's foot, so as to leave her hands free to sew or knit. But there was an early type, built on a sort of arch, itself on runners, which made the unhappy baby of this inland plain swing in a convex curve and so go through all the horrors of a night in a choppy sea. Maternal love is as deep in Poitou as everywhere; apparently paternal inventiveness was rather lacking. Anyhow, let us all be grateful we were not Poitevin babies.

Coifs are not to be described, certainly not by the mere man, but it is important to note that the true Poitevin coif is made up of various bits, separately starched, ironed, and worked up on a basis of cardboard or stiff material. They are, as everyone knows, a strict mark of origin. I am not sure what might happen to a Niortaise or a Saintaise who appeared at La Mothe-St-Héray in a La Mothaise coif: and as for any bolder spirit who should unjustly wear the high and glorious erection of the Sablaises at Les Sables . . . !

Most interesting, if not most beautiful, are the mourning or half-mourning coifs. These one still commonly sees; some have black ribbons or streamers behind. I should like to describe the beautiful La Mothe coif—a pretty peaked Cap of Liberty with the peak falling gracefully behind, with a number of variants.

I am constrained to add here, rather irrelevantly, the list of names, not of the coifs, but (for reference) of the wax dolls wearing them in the museum of Poitiers. Not Rossetti nor d'Annunzio ever strung together so beautiful a chime of musical names: Mezaline, Adèle,

Pélagie, Fausta, Philomène, Mariette, Eglantine, Justine, Edule, Adolphine, Euphrasie, Séraphine, Fidèle, Francine, Virginie, Jacqueline, Catherine. It was Francine, from Bourcefran, who had the largest coif, an enormous mitre. Virginie, from Marennes, came next, except the brides, who wore immense bridal crowns.

Among costumes, those of the Marais or Fens are striking. The men have a short blouse, or perhaps waistcoat, trousers with big pleats, and great wide-brimmed hats. The women have a small bonnet, heavily pleated black caps (but actually part of the dress itself) on the shoulders, and shortish black kilts or skirts.

The magnificent Sablaises, by the way, wear one kind of coif with their short skirts, and another, more rarely seen, with the long skirts. I was not myself fortunate enough to see any long-skirted Sablaises.

The women of the Ile de Ré, where they dress up their donkeys, used to wear the largest possible coifs.

Wedding costumes were startling, when the Niort coif, a *grisette* (all the coifs have their names), a smart kerchief at the throat, and a fine robe were worn. The men affected immense umbrellas, about which there seems to be something symbolical.

To dismiss the costumes rather briefly—as one must either be quite brief or longer than a Covenanter sermon—the evolution is from the heavy wool materials, and the designs which naturally suited these, to lighter and brighter materials, with the simple cut of the cotton frock. With these, however, was retained the corset, with its bright kerchiefs pinned on the breast, and another at the neck. The coloured apron is disappearing, or at least diminishing, rapidly.

Superstitions

Poitou, like every other part of France, has its ancient superstitions, but they are not, after all, very different from those one finds elsewhere. Some seem to have their origin in history and to go back, perhaps, to the days of the Saracens or even the troglodytes.

There are any number of stories of buried treasure, and this always in some mysterious way belongs to the Devil. Everything, apparently, the moment it was placed in the earth, became his property. We will meet this idea in connexion with treasures washed up on the coasts of the Ile de Ré. There were sorcerers and sorceresses who were supposed to have the gift of discovering hidden treasures. It is said that some of these have been employed quite recently.

Then there are many legends which arise from supposed visitations of the dead; for instance, the light of the will-o'-the-wisp is supposed always to be some wandering soul which may not be able to rest until the prayers which have been promised for its welfare have been duly offered. This little flickering fire, therefore, while it may perhaps mislead you into dangerous places, nevertheless will do you no harm. It cannot burn or in other ways injure you.

There are also stories of wild huntsmen and mysterious ghostly wolves. There are the usual details of persons who have sold their soul to the Devil; certain animals are supposed to be possessed of evil spirits; there is a horse which one meets when coming home tired on foot, that stops as if begging you to mount him, but those who do will be thrown and their necks broken, unless perchance they have in their pocket a marked coin, marked, I suppose, with a cross. Then there are grue-

some stories of animals which are really human beings condemned for a time to wander in this shape. These stories usually take the form of someone slaughtering, quite innocently, their friends or even a member of their own family. These legends one finds frequently in all parts of France, and it must be admitted that the superstitions of Poitou are not quite as interesting as those one finds, for instance, in Provence, but they are always worth studying, and the fairy Mélusine makes up for a good deal.

Village Festivals

The village festivals are dying rapidly out of Poitou, but still a certain number centre round Christmas and the day of St. John the Baptist.

In old days, on the first day of the year there would be strange processions of persons dressed to represent animals, headed by the Pope of Fools, and saying a kind of mock Mass. All that has gone long ago. The festivals of St. John's Day lasted longer. As everyone knows, there great bonfires were lit on the vigil. Everyone must have a part ; the *curé*, perhaps, or the oldest inhabitant, must throw the first faggot.

Festivals of the harvest still continue. There are special arrangements as to who shall cut the first sheaf, and the harvesters go to and from their work to the sound of the horn or cornet. Of these harvest celebrations, also, the detail is gradually being lost, but, naturally enough, a certain amount of the joy of harvest expresses itself still in various jollifications.

One of the most interesting type of village fêtes is that called the " Bachelerie," which, of course, largely consists in dancing, with a certain amount of feasting too. At Melle some inhabitant, who lies buried in

St-Pierre's Church, left the rent of a meadow as an annual gift to the King of the Bachelors, as he is called, but from this gift the King must have a Mass said on Pentecost, and he must give a feast to the young people.

There are still festivals connected with the planting of the may-tree, as one finds also in Provence. There are still elections of kings and queens, as they are called, of the village at Champdeniers. For instance, the king is he who shows the greatest skill at the game which they call *paume*, a kind of fives.

No doubt the peasants are now becoming more educated, and with education a great deal of the old customs go, but there is, none the less, plenty of gaiety left, and perhaps it may be to the good that it expresses itself rather more quietly than in the noisy village festivals of the old days.

CHAPTER X

MELLE, AULNAY, ST-JEAN, COGNAC

FROM Niort I went off to Melle, which is an ancient settlement of the Romans, and now renowned chiefly for its three exceedingly beautiful churches.

On the way into the little town I met the nearest representation I shall ever see outside a stained-glass window of the Archangel Gabriel. A clodhopping sort of boy was coming down the hill with two heavy horses and a dray, and when I asked if he could direct me he stopped his horses and turned to me an utterly angelic face, with glorious blue eyes and curly flaxen hair and a super-hierarchic smile. Moreover, seeing at once that I was a foreigner, he gave me my directions in the clearest and most beautiful voice, syllable by syllable, and having done so, he passed on his way and I saw him no more.

But, alas! he was the only creature in Melle, save perhaps a kind girl at the garage where I ultimately got a car, that had any resemblance to angels. I read afterwards that Melle is celebrated for its great fairs and sales of donkeys and mules, and never did I meet a more donkeyish or mulish people. I went into a little hotel and begged for lunch. They were all stupid and stubborn and clearly did not want to give me any. I suppose it is the only time that I have ever found people un-

willing to feed me in France. I demanded an *omelette au jambon.* That was declared, by the whole population of the kitchen, to be completely impossible, but need I say that they did produce an *omelette* and *jambon,* as separate courses. That was just their mulish way of doing it. They gave me no knife, no table-napkin, and a red-hot plate for my cheese. Only the white wine saved the situation, and it was very pleasant.

None the less, the poor old waiting-woman who ultimately supplied me with the necessary weapons such as I could not find about the place myself, and in a desultory sort of fashion cleared away, grew perfectly lyrical when I talked to her about the churches I had come to see. She knew all about the right points of a Romanesque church, and she waxed very enthusiastic about the church of her own village, La Mothe-Saint-Héray. I forbore to tell her that the church of La Mothe, though beautiful, is none the less only of the fifteenth century, and that is, of course, a mere nothing in Poitou. I am afraid that the poor old woman did not show any traces of the beauty for which the women of La Mothe are celebrated, and which they contrive to make the best of in their very charming coifs, which are, perhaps, among the most striking of those which one still finds in Poitou.

I set off after this unsatisfactory lunch, but cheered a good deal by the enthusiasm of the old woman, to see the three churches, and astonishingly fine they are. Right down in the bottom of the valley one finds St-Hilaire, which is the remains of an old Benedictine priory. It is a very wonderful example of the twelfth century. Its west front has a double arcade and some of the most elaborate sculpture that I have found on so early a work—in fact, it is the luxury of the sculpture

which impresses one most in the outside of this great church. Inside, the pillars have the richest possible capitals, and there are very beautiful arches to the windows. Farther up towards the centre of the little town is the old church of St-Savinien, of the eleventh century, which is now a prison, and which has quite a charming Romanesque belfry. The third church is that of St-Pierre, of the twelfth century. I tried very hard to get the key of this, but failed. The church is, as a rule, kept locked, and one has to go to the Sisters, who are some little way off, to demand the key. None the less, the outside is worth going to see, if there were nothing else in Melle. There is a simple west front, and inside there is the celebrated tomb of the unknown founder of the curious fête which takes place every year at Whitsuntide at Melle.

Am I over-harsh to poor Melle? The people of Melle and thereabouts seem to keep up a great many picturesque old customs and have, apparently, much love for music and old folk-songs; I am inclined to think that theirs is the best country to hunt up the old songs and their settings, especially songs for special occasions —marriage songs, Christmas carols, and so on. So let us charitably remember that a donkey was one of the famous "Musicians of Bremen," and not forget certain good qualities which the Pays Mellois also possesses.

I drove from Melle to Aulnay, passing the quite fine tower of Melzéard.

Aulnay has only one great church, but it is worth going a very long way to see. It stands in the cemetery, and belongs, like so many churches of this district, to the twelfth century. It has the most glorious sculptures, and a very fine west front indeed. One can make out the subjects, as the Martyrdom of St. Peter, our Lord

between two angels, and so on. There is also a very beautiful door on the south transept. There are three stages, or stories, in the tower, and on top is the usual Byzantine cupola.

There are also the remains of a very fine *Donjon* or keep of the thirteenth century, which was once captured by du Guesclin.

I got rather into difficulties at Aulnay, because I was found wandering about, looking into all sorts of odd places, gazing up at the Donjon, asking the most unlikely people in the wrong kind of shop for picture post cards; then I asked my way to the church and went the way I was told not to go, looked into curious yards and barns where I had no business, and ultimately was all but run in by the local gendarme, who had clearly been watching my movements. I can imagine that, had he next day taken the evidence of everybody who had seen me on my journey from Melle to Aulnay and my wanderings when I got there, he would have learnt that I hired a motor at Melle, went by secret roads by which I was not permitted to travel (which was literally true, because my driver had a special permit to go through the property of the local Marquis); that I drove at a breakneck pace, which is also quite true, because we were pursuing a very rapid motor that had run over a dog in one of the villages and we were endeavouring to get its number. Then, no doubt, the gendarme would have collected the evidence of those who had seen me prying about in the most doubtful manner, and I am sure that an enormous *dossier* could very easily have been collected against me. It would certainly have been proved that I was a very suspicious person, acting in a very suspicious manner. Fortunately, however, the full tale of my movements was not yet known to the gendarme, and, very hesitat-

ingly, he let me go, after my solemn assurance that I was not a criminal.

Without further adventure, I took the train to St-Jean d'Angély.

I always feel sorry for St-Jean, because it ought to be filled with beautiful remains of mediaeval times and has only quite a little left. The town grew up round the great and famous Benedictine abbey, that goes back to the ninth century. It was, in fact, abbey and practically nothing else for some time, but the destruction of the abbey brought with it, in a sense, the prosperity of the town, for St-Jean became a great centre of the Huguenots during the Reformation, and it was they who destroyed the greater part of the ancient abbey. Twice it was besieged, and Louis XIII pulled down all its fortifications and in various other ways punished the town. The ruins of the abbey church, though slight in comparison with its original extent, are very striking. There are three good windows and two enormous flying buttresses which have been worked up into a bell-tower.

As one hunts about St-Jean, one finds little remnants of charming architecture which no doubt belong to some of the dependencies of the abbey. There is also the delightful clock tower, under which one passes along the street of the same name. This is all that is left of the ruined fortifications, though there is a very beautiful little fountain that was brought recently from a château but which is itself of Renaissance date.

From St-Jean I made my way direct to Cognac, where it was rather a pleasure, after having been so constantly bored with the salamander which is the mark of Francis I, to run both Francis and his salamander to earth at last.

Francis was born here in 1494, and a house is shown

where it is said that his nurse lived, and where, perhaps, he spent a certain amount of his boyhood. Round these old streets are some very charming houses indeed, chiefly in the Rue Madeleine, the Rue Grande, and round about the Place of the Old Market.

On the river is the very fine fortified gate, with big towers on either side, and one can still see where the drawbridge used to fall. This belonged to the fortifications, and close by is the old castle, which is now one of the big factories of Cognac.

Anyone who goes to Cognac with an idea that he can breathe pleasant whiffs of *eau de vie* will be disappointed. There is no particular suggestion of alcohol about the place, though there are plenty of visible signs of it, in the large barrels and the heavy drays that are running through the little town. The only thing that I noticed which might suggest inebriety was that they lit the street lamps in the early afternoon.

Nothing can be more dull than the approach from the station into the town, but one is rewarded on the way by the extremely beautiful, though damaged, west front of the church. Unfortunately, the street is so narrow that one can hardly get a satisfactory view, but the sculptures are none the less very magnificent. One entry of the church goes through the old belfry, and one can get there a very admirable idea of the interior of the old Romanesque towers.

Francis I and Louise of Savoie

Some account of Cognac at the time of the birth of Francis I, and also some little history of Francis himself and of his mother, may not be inappropriate.

His was a very strange story indeed. It is only by knowing something about his early days that one can

understand something of the man as he was when he became king. His is never a very charming character. His desire for extravagance and splendour is a very marked feature, but one begins to understand much when one realizes not only his comparatively humble youth but also the long time in which he had been kept in suspense, not knowing whether he was going to be almost a nobody in the kingdom or whether he was to be its king.

In this account I make use of the special study by Maulde de la Clavière.

Louise de Savoie began life as a poor relation, and at the age of five she was adopted by her aunt, who was the famous Anne of Beaujeu. We may see in Louise those same characteristics that we find afterwards in her son Francis. Poverty in the early stages had made Louise long for two things above all—power and wealth—and when it became clear that the power was not going to be for herself her whole life was devoted to the advancement of her children. She became, as so many did, one of the pawns in the game of chess played by that master chess-player Louis XI.

It just so happened that he did not want the Count of Angoulême to marry the extremely rich heiress Marie de Bourgogne. It was necessary, therefore, that he should marry the Count to someone, and Louise, the poor relation, was handy. There was no pretence of love on either side, and the actual betrothal took place when the bride was only two years old, and it was not till she was twelve that she took up her position as the Countess of Angoulême at Cognac.

In the meanwhile the Count had shown every possible disposition to keep the marriage at arm's length. He even found himself impelled to join in an insurrection.

He was driven to Blaye and captured by the royal troops. The Count became humble and penitent, and in 1488 he signed the formal contract of marriage. It was all on a very poor scale, but the lordship of Melle was thrown in by the King, who evidently felt in a gracious mood.

Here, then, was Louise of Savoie at twelve years old, brought up by her aunt, now at Cognac as the reigning Countess, with a husband of twenty-eight who evidently did not think that his new wife was worth a great deal of trouble; at any rate, he refused to upset his present household or to do much in the way of refurnishing his castle. The Count will not interest us any longer.

Louise kept a diary which is of the utmost value to throw light upon the events of the period, and in this intimate diary we find the entry, on the 1st January, 1496, "I lost my husband." This does not mean that she had not been quite indefatigable, as far as her tender age permitted, in her attendance upon the sick-bed of the Count, and it is said that she showed a very proper spirit and that her mourning was quite deep. From that time the 1st January was always held to be a kind of special date in the history of the family, and indeed it so proved in the history of Francis.

Louise, then, was a widow at eighteen years, with a son and a daughter, living in something like poverty, still at Cognac, and having no particular future ahead of her. At the same time she never seemed to have lost heart, and always clung to the prophecy of some soothsayer that her son was going to be the King of France.

But Louise was not only a lover of money: she became a great patron of Art and Letters. Cognac was turned into a kind of little Italian Court, and painters and writers clustered about it, all under the patronage of

Louise. It will hardly be necessary to go through any account of the books they published and the pictures they painted. The chief of them, however, deserves mention. He was the Bishop of Anjou, Octavian de St-Gelais. He was equally expert in Latin and in French. He had been born at Cognac, and it was at Cognac that he found scope for his literary tastes. He was very much influenced by the study of Dante and Virgil, and his poem "Séjours d'Honneur" is rather more influenced by the politics of the time than by the mysticism of his original. Other books attributed, at least, to Octavian were in the style of Ovid, but, none the less, he was quite a worthy star in this strange little Court of Cognac.

Besides Literature and Art, Louise was deeply interested in the things of religion. François de Paule, a very real saint, was living at this time at Plessis-les-Tours. He is a strange figure, and appears from time to time among the great events of French history during this period. Louise had a special belief in him, and when, later on, she was herself close to Tours, she used to go and pluck flowers in the garden of the saint; in fact, when St-Francis died and had received a very humble burial, it was Louise who most determinedly re-buried him in a much more appropriate style.

But perhaps the most consuming of all Louise's passions was her ambition for power. On the accession of Louis XII Louise was carried off to Amboise, and later to Blois. Here she was almost a prisoner, and though she met the Queen from time to time and there was an appearance of friendliness between them, they remained the strongest possible rivals up to the date of Anne's death.

Back at Amboise, Louise devoted the whole of her

energies to the education of her children. As for Francis, according as it appeared that he might have a rival in the succession or not, he was alternately pushed into the background and brought forward again. The irritation both to Louise and to himself must have been extreme, and it was only after seventeen years of long, weary waiting, of all sorts of rebuffs and disappointments, that Louise won the great prize that her ambition had always held before her, and her son became the King of France.

Francis certainly justified the old proverb that "A miserly father has a gambling son," or the profound statement of Lord Bacon that "Those who have been pinched in their youth surfeit more when they come to plenty."

CHAPTER XI

SAINTES

FROM Cognac I made for Saintes, which is certainly one of the chief centres of interest in our district. It is not as great as Arles, but at the same time it has many charms that even Arles does not possess.

The railway station, on my arrival, was rather a tricky place to deal with, because they were just practising a new station indicator, and they put on the figures that were supposed to show the numbers of the platforms, not because they were the real numbers of the platforms but to see if they looked nice. The wily Frenchmen, of course, smelt a rat, but the poor stranger got into grave difficulties.

As one goes into the town one has to pass, as usual, a long and rather dull street, since the French railway stations are always a very long way off their towns : but if one knows the ropes one diverts at the Rue du Pérat and goes at once to see the two magnificent churches of St-Pallais and the ancient church of Notre Dame. This belongs at present to a barracks, but one may enter and look at the church without demanding any leave. The buildings of the abbey one can just see through the entrance gate.

Later on I shall have something to say about the Romanesque art, and especially of the form thereof one

gets in Saintonge; but one may say that when this church is restored back again as near as possible to what it was—and strangers are asked to contribute towards its restoration—it will be, what it was, one of the finest examples of the architecture of the province.

The little church of St-Pallais is of the twelfth century and very much dwarfed by its very beautiful neighbour. Of both churches I speak later.

"Milan (Mediolanum) of the Santones" was the old name of Saintes. The race of Santones occupied part of the chief centre of Gaulish population in Aquitaine: and central within that central district was the town which its river, its heights, its rich territories marked out as a natural capital. Students of geography know that in the old days, when pirates and rovers made coast towns dangerous, only those who were at a safe distance from the sea, but yet lay in direct lines of communication with the natural harbours and estuaries, were able to grow and prosper. Saintes had not only roads but waterways, which kept her in close touch with the sea on one hand and the interior of Gaul on the other. Nay, if not herself a port, Saintes had in those days of light-draught ships a port quite close by.[1]

The Romans saw and conquered; and then, with that admirable policy of conciliation which they displayed whenever they had got what they wanted, they made Mediolanum a "free city," and built by labour partly, no doubt, of the legionaries, but largely also of the inhabitants, the pleasure-places of a Roman city—amphitheatre, theatre, baths—and also the temples, arches, and aqueducts which always came with Roman rule.

[1] I owe much of this chapter to the excellent account by Georges and Jean Musset.

The prosperity of Saintes see-sawed with that of its neighbour, Bordeaux. Insult added to injury—Bordeaux came to the district of Saintes for its building stone, wherewith to put its sister in the shade.

Saintes itself, alas! went no farther afield for much of her building stone than to the colossal Roman edifices for which she had now no special use. Instead of theatres and baths, we have now churches and abbeys springing up. The city suffered much from wars and invasions, whether of Saracens or Normans, and later, of the English. When more peaceful times came, there came also much "modernizing" of the town, and we must remain both surprised and grateful to find that so much that is old is left.

One of the most striking of these ancient buildings, and one which we would much like to see back again, was the Roman bridge.

We can see something which will give an idea of the bridge, and the arch upon it, in the Pont Flavien near Chamas in Provence. The dedication of the arch, which now stands on the river bank, is clear; it was to Germanicus Cæsar, son of Tiberius, but with him are coupled also Tiberius himself and Drusus, his son.

Its date must be about A.D. 21. It is not, of course, a "triumphal arch" in the ordinary acceptance of the term, since it has none of the sculptures usual in triumphal monuments. The bridge had seven arches, and was therefore of great solidity. It was wide enough for a weekly market, bridges being in early days often used as open spaces. One remembers how "on the Bridge of Avignon everybody danced," though the poet has here embroidered a little, since one could not have danced much on what was a very important highway and general meeting-place.

THE ARÈNES AND ST-EUTROPE, SAINTES

We cannot follow the sad story of the decadence of the bridge and of its lamented destruction. If it was in the way of navigation, it might at least have been merely cut and not destroyed. But down it came, and we must be thankful that the arch was spared to us. In this context I must lament the recent disappearance of the modern footbridge, which must have been both pleasing and convenient in itself, and must have given a charming view of river and city.

The amphitheatre is in the common form of an ellipse. It seems to have sixty arches, and the usual rooms or dens, for one does not know whether such remains as have been found of the chambers suggest that they were for the performers or for the animals.

The ruins were used, as they were elsewhere, notably at Arles, as an enclosure for dwelling-houses. In 1868 the amphitheatre was bought as it stood for about twelve thousand francs. We do not know if the arena could be flooded; pictures taken at flood-times give us an idea of what it may have looked like when ready for a "naval battle."

On the south side is a spring, which was evidently not connected with any water-system. It is the legendary "fountain of Eustelle," and is, or was, used for divination with pins, which are thrown into the water, to find out what young women will marry within the year. The sign of this is that the pins fall in the form of a cross. Not far away are remains of buildings where were lodged the prisoners who were to appear in the arena.

On the hill-side of St-Saloine are remains of Roman baths. We must remember that these baths were usually far more than their name seems to suggest. They were great club-houses, with gymnasium, fives-

courts, running-grounds, sometimes race-courses, to exercise the body, and libraries to occupy the mind. People would no doubt put in a great part of their day there; meals would be prepared, if required, by their slaves; business would be done, the learned would forgather together, and the sporting faculty would make their bets.

I must confess that on my first view of the baths of St-Saloine I took them to be a big dyeing establishment; but on maturer consideration I came round to the more usual view. It was near these ruins that was found the Gallic altar now at St. Germain (a cast can be seen at Saintes), and other remains of the same age, including a "Goddess Mother."

For the baths water was brought from the hills, as the fastidious Romans would not use river water (except sometimes, as at Sanxay, for a special river bath), nor the water of low-lying springs, even had it been possible to force it up to the needful level. The aqueduct began at Fondgiraud. Its remains at Doubet and at Fontcouverte are most interesting. It did not take the shortest route, since the incline would have been too sharp, but meandered from Fontcouverte in a crescent shape. The water was, of course, finally distributed by lead pipes, and it is a comfort to know that the townspeople had to pay water-rates. One can see good examples of pipes in earthenware or in lead at Poitiers and elsewhere.

If the museum of Saintes does not give us as vivid a picture of the life of a city in Roman times as does the Maison Carrée at Nîmes, none the less we can reconstruct in our minds a great deal when we see the friezes and entablatures, the inscriptions, the delicate decorations (and Saintes is very rich in decorated stones), the carved

bulls' heads, the "Goddess-Mothers," the relief of the bankers at their money-tables, the tragic mask, and a very large collection of precious Roman relics.

The great church of St-Eutropius, which has the largest crypt, next to Chartres, in France, may indeed have suffered seriously by reconstruction and restoration, but retains enough of its early splendour to satisfy the most ardent antiquary, while its general effect cannot in any way be quarrelled with. Moreover, these composite churches, much though they may have lost in one way, are the epitome of the ages which have seen them grow. One ought to wax very angry in writing of St-Eutrope, but (no doubt I have not the right Monkbarns spirit in me) both St-Eutrope and St-Pierre are to me such a joy that I cannot desire vengeance on those who thought they were doing God and man service by rebuilding in the fashion of the day.

St-Eutropius himself links us to Provence and the little sea-town of Saintes Maries, whither he floated in on a divine calm, granted to the prayers of Lazarus of Bethany, with Martha, Mary of Bethany, and Mary Salome. He appears (now a bishop) at the capital of the Santones, a strange fanatic figure, but destined to triumph. The Governor's daughter, Eustelle—that is her new baptismal name—deserts her home, as Eutropius had deserted his ancestral and wealthy home, to become a humble and ardent disciple. Her father, furious, bribes assassins to dispatch Eutropius—the bite of the axe is said to be still visible on the saint's bones. Eustelle buries him in her garden; she soon follows him to the grave, but the victory is won.

Over the two graves is built the first church, to be succeeded by successive buildings.

The nave of the crypt is to my unskilled eye the most

dignified and beautiful building one could possibly devise. Obviously one cannot put a low and uniform crypt in competition with our great Gothic buildings, but in general effect I can think of nothing so impressive, in the full and best meaning of a much misused word.

The builder, to whose name all homage and honour, of this glorious crypt, and of the magnificent church above, was one Benoit.

It does not belong here to describe his work in detail. The crypt is probably latter eleventh, the church early twelfth, century. In the crypt, at the west end, there is, I think, a bit of the ninth-century church still left. Above, one sees, in the greater space and the better light, how the twelfth-century architect relieved the purposed severity of his columns by the most extravagant capitals.

The tower and spire were finished close upon 1500, and the first subscription seems to have come from Louis XI, then Dauphin, who came to be cured by St-Eutrope of the dropsy.

One rather wonders that the tower, with so sinister a heading to its list of donors, has stood all this time. It indeed threatened to fall, but was saved (about 1748) by a noble-hearted Saintais whose name is lost.

St-Pierre, which one can no longer approach by the footbridge, is not indeed possessed of the majesty of St-Eutrope, but is still a very picturesque pile. It has the advantage of being both a church in going order and a ruin, since, its roof having been lowered, some of its upper portions stand out against the sky. It has a beautiful Romanesque transept and chapel, part of the twelfth-century church. The earlier basilica was built in the fifth century, and there was an earlier building still. This basilica was built round and over certain

precious relics brought from Rome. It escaped the general burning of the city by the Normans. In the twelfth century it was taken down to be rebuilt, and pretty well every century has done something for this great building. St-Pierre enjoyed also a visit from Louis XI: it was captured in 1174 by English Richard, who, like Louis, was in revolt against paternal authority. An earlier Louis, the saint of the name, had offered thanksgiving, had caused there to be sung *Non nobis* and *Te Deum* for his victory at Taillebourg.

The present St-Pierre is a perfect orgy of flying buttresses, many of which, as has been said, fly nowhere.[1] They are perhaps the more beautiful.

The Protestants in their iconoclastic zeal destroyed a great part of the church in 1568, led by the worthy but misguided Coligny; the tower resisted their marauding hands. They carried off the bells. The Terror spared the tower also, but massacred Saintes' last bishop, de la Rochefoucault, thus ending the line which began with Eutropius himself. It took three centuries to rebuild the church, money came in slowly, revenues had diminished, and so we have in the present building a long progress in later-day architecture. Among its most striking features is its quite remarkable corkscrew staircase.

The sculptures of its great door are of unusual perfection. Among the most interesting, apart from historical personages, are the eight musician angels, with the instruments of the period. It may be that the religious inspiration of earlier days is lacking; there is still a very high degree of beauty, and a variety past all belief.

[1] As one sees also at Tours, on the side next La Psallette, and at St-Jean d'Angély.

The church of the Abbaye des Dames—I have exhausted my epithets—was built in 1047, on the site of an earlier building. Even its present state of desecration cannot hide its splendours and its beauties, many of which are due to Sibylle of Burgundy, abbess about 1120, and her architect Berenger.

The sculptures of the façade and the arches deserve the most careful study. In earlier days there still survived the equestrian statue, which was perhaps of Constantine. In the left bay we have the Assumption of the Virgin; in the right, the Institution of the Eucharist. One of the capitals on the left perhaps represents the "Truce of God"—a man separates two fighting knights, one of whom, to make sure, he grasps by the hair.

One odd effect of the arrangement of the carvings in the archivolts of the Romanesque doorways is that the figures gradually converge face to face at the keystone. Often they have their outspread heads held in front of them in rather a cramped attitude, with the lamentable result that the two who meet at the keystone are making each to each a gesture of contumely, usually avoided in better circles. Some of the carvers must have observed this, and in one arch the angels were so arranged that the two at the top met in the act of kissing—a beautiful symbolical effect.

One of Saintes' great men is Bernard Palissy, the potter, who burnt almost his very bed from beneath him in the fever of discovery—one to whom knowledge and progress cost dear indeed. It may be that some of his discoveries were secrets already known; but he stands as the model of the pioneer enthusiast—and a Palissy dish is now priceless.

As we wander through Saintes we find the beautiful

window of the old Chapel of the Jacobins; the old Echevinage, now the Library, its fine tower standing boldly up in the corner; a glorious staircase (Rue Bretonnière); some very fine houses, one of which contains the excellent museum of M. Mestreau, which the owner most generously throws open to the public, and where one finds everything that throws light on the daily life of Saintonge, as well as on the history of Saintes itself. One sees the portrait of a well-known Saintais, M. Guillotin; "An excellent citizen" is the inscription below it. Certainly his philanthropic invention accounted for several excellent citizens.

My visit to the archæological museum at Saintes was made the pleasanter by the concierge who, in ecstasy at the beauty of the friezes and entablatures, assured me that in those days they had only stone implements to chisel with. I forbore to tell her that shaving came into Rome in 300 B.C., the one date that every schoolboy knows. Moreover, she held the common popular belief that the Roman statues of heroic size represented the actual size of Roman men—"there were giants in those days," and we, as one of the Romans himself said, are ourselves degenerate, and will leave behind us a generation more degenerate still.

At Saintes was staying an old Norman (like many Normans, the very picture of our conventional John Bull, who is nothing if not French) who had never strayed so far south before. His one desire—in order to seize the opportunities of the situation—was to eat mushrooms, which he did. He explained that there are no mushrooms in Normandy (which seems slightly incredible). However, he did not think much of them, and his comment was like that of the old skipper of the Leigh bawley in a well-known yachting book, who,

brought up on coarse bread and dripping, once, when blown across to Denmark, tasted butter—"Niver no mo'! Niver no mo'!"

I was delighted at Saintes by coming across a tiny greengrocer's shop with the following inscription upon it: "Produits de l'Espagne, d'Afrique, des Canaries, de Chine, du Midi, de France, et du pays." I was pleased with this inscription chiefly by the way in which they keep their own little district as the grand climax after minor places like Spain, Africa, and China.

Saintes being so completely charming, I made a long stay there and used it as a centre for some very delightful excursions. One of these was to Taillebourg, the site of two celebrated battles, one that in which Charlemagne defeated the Saracens, and the other, of 1242, in which we were defeated by St-Louis.

There is not much left of the old Castle, but one is allowed to go into the park and see the ivy-covered ruins. It is set upon a magnificent cliff and must have been an extremely powerful defence.

Let it comfort us that the battle of Taillebourg, where we were defeated by Louis IX—not, it seems, a great general, but our King, Henry III, was both a bad general and a foolish person—was not a very serious affair. We were, in fact, hardly there at all; the forces were mostly French, with a handful of English knights.

Henry, relying on the bridge, only kept guard at its head, and then seems to have gone to sleep. Louis (St-Louis, as we now know him) threw forces across by boats, and attacked the bridgehead at the same time. The guards gave way; Henry lost not only the bridge but also his head, and made no attempt to cut off the French as they crossed. He asked a truce, got it, and bolted.

In the museums of Poitou one sees swords, helmets, and so on dredged up from under the bridge.

On the site of so lamentable a defeat it was pleasant to chat with some attractive little children, who told me all I wanted to know, advised me where to go and what to see, and generally made the quarrel up in the nicest possible manner.

There was a skirmish at Taillebourg also in 1351: the English horse were merely delaying the French, to get their plunder out of the way. It was a good solid skirmish, however, in the good old style. The two lines of horsemen met with the customary clash, passed through each other's lines, and then had another "ding" on the way back. We were thought to have "dinged" hardest and so we won. Anyhow, the loot got away safely.

It was in the castle of Taillebourg that Jacques Cœur was locked up under suspicion of having poisoned Agnès Sorel.

From Taillebourg I made my way to Fenioux, where is one of the very finest village churches and also a very beautiful example of what are called "lanterns of the dead."

I was very fortunate on the way to Fenioux to meet by chance a learned antiquary, and, though he was unable to accompany me the whole way, he told me what to look for when I arrived at the church and most kindly showed me over the little church of Grand-Jean as a kind of practice-ground for the bigger church of Fenioux.

In this church is what we should call a low door closed up in the wall, and he explained to me that it was probably a family tomb. The chief joy, perhaps, of Fenioux, besides its splendid front and its admirable

capitals, is the *fenêtres croisées*—that is to say, the little Romanesque windows with the pierced stone still in its original place, as was regularly the custom before they learnt the use of glass for windows. So far as I remember, this was the only example of these windows that I saw on my travels: no doubt there are others. The "lantern" is singularly beautiful. It stands at present rather desolate by itself in a field, but one can get the most effective views of the church with the lantern in the foreground. It rather suggests a Greek than a Roman (or "Romanesque") piece of work. It is built of a group of charmingly slender pillars, with a little Byzantine cupola on top.

At Saintes I came in for a very wonderful show. Every year they have one or two performances of French plays in the arena, and I was most fortunate to be in time for one of them.

I went down the evening before at about nine o'clock and found everything about half-ready, and everybody from Saintes was there. There was a hubbub, and grown-up people and all the smallest children were clambering, at risk of their lives, about the old Roman seats and passages.

The setting of the arena is very effective. There is the background of masonry, with the great church of St-Eutrope standing on the hill beyond.

On the stage were unrehearsed performances in progress. Little girls would rush in and dance across, perhaps with their little brothers, just from the sheer joy of life; infants were blowing shrill tin trumpets in the orchestra; in fact, all the most veritable little imps of Saintes were up to every kind of mischief that imps could contrive, "*Non sancti sed* . . ." They were taking running jumps from the stage to the orchestra, and the

old Romans little knew what pleasure they were going to give in those far-off ages, long after they themselves had sunk back into Italy, and long after the works that they put up with so much sweated labour had crumbled away and been carted off to build the neighbouring houses.

The show itself is rather difficult to describe, but it was one long joy. It began at about half-past seven, and the company broke up something well after midnight. The play was quite a fine one of the tragic order, and after the play we had some Engish dancers and very beautiful effects thrown upon the stage by coloured lights. At first it all seemed a bit incongruous, but one could not help remembering that, apart from the lights, one was looking upon a scene very much of the kind which the old Romans were so fond of, and the dancing was very much in what we should call the Greek style.

It was rather difficult finding one's way out in the dark, but somehow we all poured forth by the proper *vomitoria* and nobody seemed to be damaged, but I could not help wondering what would have happened if a sudden rainstorm had come on and what a wild rush for shelter would have meant among all those thousands of people scrambling about among the dark ruins.

The next day Saintes was still in a very excited condition, in fact it was rather a pleasure and an interest to see a little French town that had temporarily taken leave of its senses. There was an air of great movement; everybody was running wildly about; there was an exhibition of paintings and there were all sorts of games and amusements; but the chief solemnity was the opening of the new post office. I met the Mayor and Corporation on its way to perform this very solemn ceremony. This chiefly consisted, so far as I could

make out, of drinking glasses of champagne; for when I went in with the rest of the crowd to visit the new post office after it was declared open, the counters were mostly littered with empty glasses. It certainly was very magnificent indeed, with beautiful oak fittings, and everything was ready to begin—it only wanted the young ladies behind the counter. I bought what I hope was the last stamp at the old post office, and made merry with the officials there over the incident. I paid them the heartfelt compliment of saying that I hoped that at the new post office they would at least retain the staff of the old one. They were nice, pleasant people.

Round about Saintes

One of the great difficulties of seeing the neighbourhood of any place in France, however attractive it may be, is that you must always start by any public conveyance at six o'clock in the morning. Of course one can motor more comfortably.

There are some good castles and some very beautiful churches in the neighbourhood of Saintes—the Castle, for instance, of Balanzac, which is only about fourteen miles away. There is a ruined, or half-ruined, tower to the church at Berneuil, extremely beautiful and of a very admirable type. There are four lanterns on either side of the little spire, and perhaps there may be some link between these lanterns which one finds so regularly in the Romanesque towers and the "lanterns of the dead."

There is an admirable west front at Chadenac, which is towards Pons; another at Corme-Royal, which is no great distance on the line called the "Economic Railway of Charente." I trust I shall not be involved in a libel action if I say that this railway appears to me to be

economic in respect of everything but coal and smoke, which is of a peculiarly black and sulphurous kind.

There is a very remarkable fifteenth-century door at Crazannes, which lies on the same railway—worth quite a long journey to see of itself, but there is quite a good keep alongside also.

At Fléac is a very strange church, narrowing towards the choir. There is another remarkable west front at Pérignac, and at Rétaud and at Rioux (both of which you can reach from Tesson on the railway already referred to) there are very fine churches—that at Rioux being a real model of the type of Saintonge, particularly in the apse, where the sculpture is especially delicate.

No one, therefore, need be at all dull if he makes a prolonged stay at Saintes. With railway, autobus, and on foot, he can combine a great many of these little expeditions, which will all be made easy for him by a visit to the Syndicat d'Initiative.

CHAPTER XII

ROYAN AND PONS

FROM Saintes I made an expedition to Royan, and, according to my fashion, I went as far as possible on foot, starting in good time, so that I might see on the way the curious Roman remain called the Pire Longe. All we can really say about this is that it is very definitely Roman. It has a square base and on top there is a rough sort of cone. Antiquarians have discussed the purpose of this odd-looking building, which stands in a little vineyard close by the road. Perhaps I may say that the road as given in the *Guide Bleu* does not seem to me to be quite accurate, and I should certainly have lost my way in making for Saujon had it not been that I met a delightful old woman driving a donkey-cart towards me. I heard her long before I saw her. She was, after the fashion of those parts, chattering away the whole time to her donkey, carrying on a regular but one-sided conversation. I met her, and inquired my route, and was very kindly directed, but in jerky sentences wedged in between various remarks made to the donkey. When I went on my way and she went up in the direction of the Pire Longe, the donkey, apparently being seized with antiquarian zeal, stopped and looked at the ruin, and I heard the old woman gently expostulating with the donkey for wasting time in so useless a pursuit: "Allons, allons!" said the old woman. "C'est la

Pire Longe!"—as much as to say, "It is only a stupid bit of Roman remain of which no one can tell the origin or purpose: why ever stop and waste time over it?"

For my part, I did not waste time over it, because one just sees it and there is an end, but I did try to spend a certain amount of time in working up the possibilities, namely, that it might be a signal for those entering the mouth of the distant river, or, again, it might perhaps be merely one of those absurd monuments to no one in particular that one finds so constantly in the neighbourhood of Roman settlements.

As one goes on one's way to Saujon, one passes close by what is called the Camp of Cæsar. I was unable to make very much of this camp, though it was quite clear that a camp of some sort it was.

There was also, on my way thither, a curious kind of beehive structure, which may be comparatively modern, but which looked to me very much as if it had been built from some more ancient structure.

By the road-side one can ascend to a slight eminence, where there have been discovered the remains of a square tower, and also a Roman bath with columns and a certain number of mosaics still left.

At Sablonceau there are remains of a Benedictine abbey, and the church, of the same date as the foundation of the monastery (1136), has still something of its twelfth-century character, especially its cupolas.

Saujon does not call for any great comment. It is really a modern bathing establishment, has an interesting park, and is a thoroughly well-built little town. Its church is uninteresting, but it owes its popularity to its excellent climate and the way in which the various medical organizations have contributed to develop its

curative resources. There was an old church of the eleventh century, but it was destroyed in the eighteenth.

Between Saujon and Royan is an interesting little village with an extremely fine church—Médis. The church is in good order and is of the twelfth century, and Médis is also renowned for its excellent white wines.

Royan itself is one of the greatest of the French seaside places, rather of the Biarritz order. It has a large array of excellent hotels and during the season is crowded in every possible way. Its streets are far too narrow for the amount of traffic, especially on the front. It was an old Roman port, and is mentioned by Tibullus, and after some little time of neglect, and after passing for a short period into English hands, it became again a port used for the smaller vessels—especially, of course, for the sardine fishery, for which, as we know, Royan is celebrated and to which it has given its name of "Royans."

The sardine boats are peculiarly beautiful. They help to make a perfect orgy of colour along the edge of the very beautiful *plage*, and they have the happy custom of hanging up their nets, as if they were sails, to dry, which gives them the effect of the "brown skeletons of leaves that lag along the forest brooks."

One generally makes some sea excursion from Royan, and one of the best trips is that which takes you across the Gironde and then back via Meschers. One gets an excellent view both of Royan itself and also of the coast, which is particularly charming, especially at Talmont, where one sees the unusually picturesque twelfth-century church standing right up on its rock almost in the sea, into which it would certainly have long ago fallen but that the rock has been reinforced by immense blocks of masonry.

At Meschers one visits, as a rule, the grottos, which are holes in the rock, and some of which no doubt go back to some very early period. People say that they were the caves of troglodytes, and they have been used for various purposes, possibly for hermits, and certainly by fishermen for some considerable time. For the fishermen they have the advantage that you can have your fishing-net slung upon a gaff, as it were at your front door. This is a very common method of fishing: the net, called a *carrelet*, being large and square, is let down by a pulley into the water, and, so far as I can make out, is merely left there for a certain period and then pulled up rather suddenly. It does seem a slightly haphazard way of trying to get fish. I could never find that anything in the way of bait was used in the centre of the net, as I should have expected it to be, but I suppose there is some good reason for that. At any rate, one does see fairly respectable fish caught by this method.

The caves have been absorbed by various families, who have furnished some of them as ordinary living-rooms, and possibly live there. At any rate, one is shown rooms whose furniture is supposed to represent various periods. These are not interesting and are rather sordid, and I advise any visitors to make for the caves farthest away from Royan, which seem to me to be the most interesting, having been left more in their primitive fashion. There are said to be also cave connexions with some neighbouring castle.

There is a very pretty little beach at Meschers, and also on the way to Royan a very charming little place with a good beach—St-Georges de Didonne.

Another of my expeditions from Saintes was to Pons, which I found particularly pleasing. The view

that one gets approaching the town from across the river is quite one of the best that I found in the southern part of my journeyings; in fact, the whole town is old and certainly picturesque. The old château has a pleasing façade, but it is chiefly remarkable for its magnificent dungeon, or keep, which stands towering over the entire town. There is nothing very picturesque about this ancient keep, but for dignity and strength it is certainly one of the best I have ever seen. Behind the castle, towards the town, there is a pleasant public garden, where various gipsy children were playing about at the time I passed through it.

There is a very fine chapel at St-Vivien, of the eleventh century, and there is a fine gateway, which links the old church of St-Martin to the hospital.

Quite close to the château there is the ancient chapel of St-Gilles at the foot of the garden, with a very admirable Romanesque tower and an old Renaissance front close by. These show clearly the very strong contrast between the work of these two ages.

Not very far from the station is the castle of Usson, a very fine piece of Renaissance work.

I was much interested during lunch at Pons to find myself sitting opposite a man who was unable, according to his own story, to eat anything at all. As a result, the menu had to be altered in several particulars to suit his requirements, but I was pleased to see that, though he kept declaring that he could not eat anything, he got through an extremely substantial lunch all the same.

CHAPTER XIII

ROCHEFORT AND LA ROCHELLE

IT was with the greatest possible regret that I left Saintes and made, in the first instance, up to Rochefort. It is a town, of course, of a certain interest. Any place that has been, so to speak, built to order, will always have its attractive side, and Rochefort, though originally an ancient town, was practically created as a huge military port by Colbert in 1665. Immediately it attracted the attention of France's various rivals on the sea, ourselves included, but the strength of its position enabled it always to escape.

There are excellent gardens and parks, but it is certainly not a place in which I ever wish to live; in fact, I seem to remember Rochefort chiefly because they gave me at lunch much the largest table-napkin I have ever seen in my life, which, when tucked in my neck in the correct French fashion, was like a bishop's apron, and made me regret, as every traveller has regretted a hundred times, that they will not exchange their table-napkins with their towels!

From Rochefort I made a particularly interesting expedition. First to Moëze, a somewhat dull journey, as the whole country here, right to the sea, is exceedingly flat, but one had the slight excitement of crossing the river in a ferry which is towed by a small and extremely

fussy steamer. It is very remarkable the way in which they manage to manœuvre, as the Gironde there runs fairly strong, and in flood-time must run very strongly indeed; but they managed to get me and my car over quite safely.

There was an amusing notice on the ferry which said that the public was begged to avoid any "direct observations" to the personnel. As the personnel not only were, strictly speaking, bargees, but also strapping men of about six feet, one did not feel inclined to try the experiment.

Moëze has a church with a particularly beautiful spire, which acts, as so many of these spires do anywhere in the neighbourhood of the sea, as a kind of beacon. But what one generally goes to see at Moëze is the extraordinary Hosanna Cross, dated about 1563. Of these crosses in general I shall try to say something at a later time, but the cross at Moëze is without doubt one of the most beautiful of all, and certainly one of the most elaborate. It is called a Hosanna Cross as it carries the inscription, "The children of the Hebrews, carrying boughs of olives, saluted the Lord, crying, Hosanna in the highest." It is like a perfectly charming Greek temple, with very beautiful Corinthian columns, four each side, and a curious pillar, with the cross itself on the top. The view which one gets of the cross and the spire together, as one stands behind the cemetery, is very striking, and more majestic, at any rate, than the very charming view of the church at Fenioux, with its more slender "lantern of the dead" in the foreground.

From Moëze one goes on to Brouage, which, again, is a very remarkable, ready-made little town. A little town, at any rate, it was, for now it is only a small

RUE PERNELLE, LA ROCHELLE

village, and does not even belong to its own commune. Richelieu developed it, already fortified as it was, to become the centre or base of his operations against La Rochelle. It still has its stone ramparts. The road cuts through them, and the road itself is pretty; but it is a completely charming walk to go round the ramparts and see the gay but rather untidy gardens that have grown up round about them. The little town stands straight out of the fens, and one comes upon it almost suddenly. In the old days, of course, the sea came close up to it.

Although the desolate houses give a feeling of melancholy, the verdure within the walls is very attractive, and one is very much indeed drawn to this old-world place. Those who know all about fortifications, or would like to know, can make a special study at Brouage of the way in which a fortified town was constructed before the days of the great Vauban.

Its church is of no special interest, except that the old governors of the place were buried there, and that Champlain, the founder of Quebec, being a Brouage man, has a monument erected to his memory. The church was also restored by grateful Canadians. It could do with a little more restoring now.

Everybody has heard of La Rochelle. The city is not of any very great antiquity as it stands to-day, but it has all the appearance of an old mediaeval place by reason of its arcades, which run down both sides of many of the streets. A good many remains of its really older days, happily, are left.

Though La Rochelle cannot go back as far as some of her neighbour towns and villages, and though her older buildings have suffered from fire and siege, yet

she has many beauties, even apart from the beauty inseparable from sea and ships.[1]

The chief port of this part of the coast in old days was Chatelaillon, now quite a modern seaside town. There are just a few fragments at La Rochelle of Roman date. Most of the old buildings were wooden—since the very site of La Rochelle was long precarious—and these have largely disappeared; though of mediaeval wood and brick houses, there are still some charming examples.

In spite of this, La Rochelle has many individual charms, and, what is more, has, somehow, all the general appearance of an ancient city. This is no doubt partly due to the delightful arcades which line so many of the streets, and which deserve a great deal of study, since each arch, or group of arches, differs from its, or their, neighbours. In the Place d'Armes, for instance, as you leave the cathedral behind you on the left, there are some very pleasing arches which must be very old indeed, and have an ecclesiastical look about them. Then, in the Rue des Merciers, you have arches within arches, and transverse arches running in from the street arcade.

Besides the arcades there are the old streets—chief among them the Rue des Merciers, running down to the Port—and on the Port itself are some admirable "old bits" left. Then the old part of the church by the Port, St-Sauveur; and the towers and the Lantern and the Clock Tower. Need I speak of the Hôtel de Ville, or of some particularly fine Renaissance houses, or rather mansions, with their fine courtyards? And if you are bold and "poke about" into dingy entrances,

[1] Apart from observation and study on the spot, I have found much help in the history of La Rochelle in De Vaux de Folletier's work entitled *La Rochelle*, Pijollet, 1923.

you will find splendid old dwellings enclosed about with sheds and storehouses—while if you go up a sort of alley-way in the Market Place, to the left of a shop with the sign of "Ten Thousand Chemises" (in these days of millions the number seems rather meagre) you will find a beautiful old window—just the tracery and nothing more. The marvel really is that so much charm is left.

For some time La Rochelle was an English town, having passed in the dower of Aliénor to Henry Plantagenet, our Henry II. John Lackland, her son, "the most able and the most ruthless of the Angevins," landed there. But La Rochelle always liked to be French, and we cannot blame her for not being over-fond of our very unsatisfactory King John. A mile from where I write [1] is a beautiful effigy of a lady supposed to have been poisoned by him by a present of a "pochd egg," and a man who would send a "pochd egg" (skilfully cooked to conceal prussic acid) to a lovely and innocent lady—to say nothing of his political crimes—was not a person to appeal to true and loyal Frenchmen. Henry III made a feeble attempt to win back this Queen of the Sea, but she was proof against his gold (his gifts were kinder, at least, than King John's), and in the confederacy of the "Four Coast Towns"—Santander and others—she became rich and prosperous. Yet she could not escape the penalties of her "fatal dower of beauty." She was a prize to be fought for, and in the Treaty of Brétigny she fell to England and the Black Prince. Even the Black Prince would not reconcile her to English domination. Du Guesclin enters, and she is French again. In 1419 the "White City," as the English called her, sees an English fleet

[1] At Dunmow Priory in Essex.

prisoner in her harbour. Louis XI enters the town, then part of the duchy of his brother, in 1472—without exciting much enthusiasm; but the merry monarch, François I, enters in 1519 amid appropriate merry-makings! None the less, the proud city, which was now becoming rather spoiled by royal cossetings and unusual privileges, exercised the proper right of humanity to refuse to pay taxes, had to be suppressed, and then heartily flattered by the wily François, who tells them, "I am annoyed at these little recent upsets; but I think I have won your hearts, and I assure you, on the honour of a gentleman, that you have mine." By this "just exchange" (was ever a better bargain driven?) all was well again, and it is a peaceful and prosperous Rochelle once more which builds part of its fine Hôtel de Ville and some of its best mansions, like that (so called) of Diane de Poitiers.

I shall not pursue the sad tale of the Huguenot wars, except to say that La Rochelle became a great Huguenot centre. One weeps to think of the damage done. A stalwart Catholic garrison is established there under "Captain Richelieu," François de Plessis. But the Huguenots gather strength. Condé, Coligny, Queen Jeanne, and Henry of Navarre visit it. Henry makes a little speech: "I can act better than I can talk." The citizens rebuild their fortifications, they send to Queen Elizabeth and get a promise of help. Then comes St. Bartholomew's Day. The Court needs La Rochelle, and tries to coax the citizens to terms. The city is besieged. But by the peace of Bergerac it is permitted to remain a Huguenot stronghold. The Edict of Nantes rather annoys the citizens, as giving too much liberty to their rivals; but they contrive to work things in their own way, and it was not

till 1599 that the Bishop of Saintes managed to celebrate High Mass at La Rochelle. In 1627 Buckingham's fleet appeared, and La Rochelle, so far neutral, accepted the English alliance, protesting also her devotion to France.

Then came the siege, the story of which most of us know well, if only through the vivid pages of Dumas. Later I shall give some account of a diary of those days; but the military and naval operations would need a fuller account than these pages permit. Chains, sunk barges, and so on, kept the enemy out. Richelieu, based at Brouage (rebuilt for the purpose) tried to rush things, but the town held out till two disappointments of help from English fleets, which "came and saw" but did little else, broke the resolution even of men like Jean Guiton, the valorous mayor. Louis XIII entered on All Saints' Day, 1628. The day before he had sent in a great store of bread, and he himself was preceded by herds and flocks for slaughter. Once again, even after this fierce resistance, La Rochelle was to be coaxed! and coaxed she was—fullness after hunger is a wonderful coaxer. The King was warmly received —the citizens found him quite "different to what they had looked for;" Richelieu himself said the first Mass at St. Margaret's! Despite the King's conciliations, the White City suffered—most of its fortifications were razed, so that "a plough could pass into the town," part of the buildings, with the Hôtel de Ville, declared Royal Domain. With this rather hard peace, La Rochelle's troubles were not over. Many Huguenots, on the occasion of the Edict of Nantes, went off to America; but those who remained found, in the course of about a century, more toleration.

In the wars of Louis XIV Dutch and English fleets threatened the White City; it was therefore fortified

on the lines of Vauban. Lord Hawke swooped down in 1756, occupied the Ile of Aix, but kept clear of La Rochelle. Peace came at last, and with peace, much trade, especially with America, Canada, and the Indies. To this trade the loss of Canada was a severe blow.

The Revolution comes: churches are degraded or destroyed, buildings are mutilated, streets are renamed (Rue de l'Encyclopédie, Rue de l'Inoculation !). In 1808 Napoleon and Josephine visited La Rochelle, which was beginning to get back some of her former prosperity. But then came the English blockade, and it was not till the fall of the Empire that trade again bloomed, and with the building of La Pallice docks La Rochelle is now a great port, though no longer a fortified place. Much that was precious was destroyed, much was built over or obscured, in the nineteenth century. But enough remains to make La Rochelle a real joy to the visitor. Let no one pass it by.

A few words must be said of some of the special buildings and relics of La Rochelle.

One reason for our interest in the architecture of Aunis and Saintonge, and of those countries where the English held domination, is that possibly there has been a kind of reaction from English styles upon the native style. We know certain churches to be of English building: but, apart from these, there was very likely a direct influence of our Gothic developments, our decorated and flamboyant, to be traced in this part of France, for it must never be forgotten that we had highly daring and highly organized native architects, and that our church architecture and our church music, as well as the minor arts of illumination and so on, though owing much to earlier Continental inspiration, is rightly one of our chief national prides.

It is useless lamenting all that Protestant iconoclasm has robbed us of in La Rochelle alone. No frescoes, hardly any statues (a few damaged examples on the tower of St-Sauveur), no glass.

The cathedral dates only from 1742. It was for some time the city's banqueting hall, though, as a sort of concession to its original purpose, it bore the rather inappropriate inscription, "The French people recognizes the Supreme Being and the Immortality of the Soul"—words which seemed to suggest that this was as far as they would go. It must indeed have made a very dignified banqueting hall; as a church it is a failure, and even Bougereau's fine paintings in the cupola do not much help the general dullness.

In the third chapel of the left, beneath a picture of Our Lady "of the Port," is a view (1664) of the harbour. In St-Sauveur we miss the glory of the second church on this site, Michel Colombe's "Deposition," destroyed in 1569. There is a striking votive ship hanging in the nave. The ancient tower is difficult to get a view of; but it is well worth trying. Of St-Jean the bell-tower alone remains. It was in the Chapel of the Oratory that Richelieu celebrated the first Mass after the surrender in 1628—the chalice and paten which he used are in the Museum. The convent is a school, the church a "speech room." The Convent of the Augustins is a school of the Ursulines; the cloister and the chapel are as they were in the seventeenth century. Such is the sad story of most of the church and convent architecture of La Rochelle!

Let us turn to the Towers, for the walls (impregnable always—only Famine could overstep them) are gone, except the stretch between the Towers of the Chain and the Lantern. The old La Rochelle was clearly

little short of another Carcassonne. The Tour St-Nicolas, possibly built by the English, but never re-entered by them after its early days, bravely retains its mediaeval style and character. It was restored and strengthened in 1884. To puzzle posterity the spring of an arch aloft on the harbour side seems to suggest, at least, an idea of linking the tower with the Tower of the Chain, or an inner tower now disappeared. No doubt some sort of projection from the tower, overhanging the harbour, might have been very handy in the days of boiling oil and lead. But there are difficulties in supposing a bridge, though the art of erecting quite lengthy wooden structures was not unknown and was indeed in some sense practised in many of the larger castles. There is no corresponding feature (at least I could not find one) on the Chain Tower, and nobody mentions what must have been a celebrated work, though a miniature in the National Library represents something of the sort, in a picture of a harbour entrance.

To rush into archæological frays is dangerous. But if I may venture my theory, it is this. Direct connexion between the two towers would have been most valuable in time of war. Let it be supposed that, when the occasion demanded, a light bridge could be let down from, or built, or swung as a cantilever, out from the Tower of the Chain—this bridge might have been supported from the entrance bed, or even on an anchored hulk. Now suppose on the Tower of St-Nicolas a machine like that for a drawbridge, on the projection which has excited so much speculating. It seems to me that a sort of lengthy gangway could be lowered from this machine, and its far end hauled by ropes to meet the bridge thrown out from the Chain Tower.

When not so in use, the gangway would hang down loose. I am imagining, what is likely, that on the inner, or entrance, sides of both towers there were the ordinary wooden outer galleries which are found of course in all mediaeval castles. On these either end of the extemporized "bridge" would rest. This is at least more likely than a wooden counterpart of the upper road of the Tower Bridge on the Thames—which is not, however, quite impossible. Boats would pass close to the Tower of St-Nicolas, where there would be ample room for their masts.

The Tower of the Chain is almost of the same date as its opposite number—a little tower helped to support and stretch the Chain over to St-Nicolas Tower, where one end was fixed. The old Chain is to be seen in the Museum; it attracted the wit of Rabelais.

The Tower of the Lantern is younger by about a century. It was a fortified lighthouse. It was in later times a prison. Tourists are called upon to be moved at the story of the Four Sergeants who lay there; they were not Rochelais, but were seized when their regiment entered the town, being implicated in the Berton conspiracy, and in fact only two were imprisoned in this tower, and one of these two for a fortnight only. All four were put to death in Paris in September 1822.

It is distressing to think that we nearly lost this beautiful tower in 1651: it was within an ace of being blown up in the Fronde troubles. There are a good many prisoners' *graffiti* scratched on the walls—some English. The spire was, of course, built as an additional help to mariners—it would not have suited an ordinary tower of this date.[1]

[1] There is an inscription on the tower which says: "La Tour est visitable chaque jour." *Visitable* is painted over "visible," which must have seemed a "glimpse of the obvious."

The fine Clock Tower is of the fourteenth century. In 1672 its two arches were made one, so that traffic might pass through it. It is to be wished that some of the traffic which now passes through might be diverted farther seawards and sent round by another route. It is a noisy "centre of animation" and sometimes rather dangerous.

Four old gates remain—one near the Chain Tower, the Porte Dauphine; northward, the Porte Neuve and the Porte Royale.

The Hôtel de Ville is a charming mixture, begun in the fifteenth century. The Arcade, of great beauty, is of the late sixteenth, and the rather stumpy columns are grouped two and two in an original fashion. It is a quite excellent façade. Within are certain rather doubtful relics of Jean Guiton, the Piero Capponi of La Rochelle.

La Rochelle possessed one of the oldest hospitals in France, but very little remains of its thirteenth-century structure. Those who like beautiful china should ask to see its pharmacy with its Nevers jars.

Of old houses one finds excellent examples in the Rue des Merciers and Rue du Mirage and elsewhere. Of stone houses most famous perhaps is the Henri II mansion in the Rue des Augustins called the house of Diane de Poitiers—a house of pleasure rather than a serious dwelling-house, as its plan seems to show. It is worth careful and detailed study.

In the Rue Dupaty is the Hôtel Marchegay, on the site of a famous house where Henri IV and his mother Jeanne d'Albret once lodged.

In the Rue Gargoulleau is a fine house now the Library and Museum, on the site of an earlier mansion, where many famous people were housed—Louis XIII,

Anne of Austria, Condé, and others. No. 3 of the Rue des Merciers is the house of Jean Guiton, and No. 3 of Rue Nicolas Venette is the fine mansion of the doctor of that name who died in 1688. Three seems a lucky number in La Rochelle; a fine wood house in Rue Pas-du-Minage (which seems to mean—"Not Rue du Minage, but quite close to it") is of the fifteenth century, and is naturally No. 3.

La Rochelle's Renaissance houses are remarkably strong in gargoyles—see the Maison Venette—and often have quaint inscriptions.

I may mention here a theory held by at least one English archæologist—not the writer—that English houses where brick and wood are used together were all originally wood and plaster, the bricks having been inserted when the plaster began to go. My impression of such houses in Western France is that they were certainly built as we see them. The arrangement of the bricks is very cunning and neat, and must, I feel, have been planned for their original setting; or rather, perhaps, the wood beams have been arranged in their charming criss-crosses to suit the lie of the bricks.

But let the intelligent tourist keep his eyes "skinned" and observe all these most interesting points for himself.

So ends my meagre account of La Rochelle—a city which spent most of its time being destroyed and rebuilt, and which yet in some unaccountable and miraculous manner has all the charm of an unspoiled mediaeval town.

I was told that English tourists generally look in, and finding that there is nothing much in the way of *plage*, run off to seaside places where they get more beach and a more elaborate casino. For such "dull elfs" I do not write. La Rochelle has a quite respect-

able little *plage*, and deserves a good week from the most volatile tourist.

At La Rochelle one can pass a great deal of time very happily at a café on the quay, where one can see all sorts of curious marine types, and can now and then watch the beginning of a sailors' quarrel; these are fairly frequent and not very deadly. The fisherwomen and fisher-girls are often quite striking; some evidently come from far south. On one occasion the town lights all went out for a time; but a party of French Boy Scouts promptly produced a candle. Can you ever catch a Boy Scout out?

La Rochelle is wonderful for its colours. The fishing-boats seem to have sails alternately blue and brown, but, what is more, the sailors also seem to have either brown trousers patched with blue or blue trousers patched with brown. I evolved a theory both as to the sails and the trousers—namely, that when you buy a ship a pair or two of blue trousers is thrown in with the blue sail and brown ones with the brown sail, and when your sail gets old enough for patching and your trousers get old also, you do not use your blue sail to patch your blue trousers, but, by some unwritten law, you must exchange it with an old brown sail and patch them therewith, and vice versa. Thus, brown sails are patched with blue, blue with brown, and trousers in the same fashion. I cannot answer for the theory, but one thing is quite certain, that there is always this perpetual variety of colour either in the boats or in the clothes of the sailors.

It is partly this charming colour scheme which attracts so many artists to La Rochelle. Apart from my theory about the trousers, I have a shrewd suspicion that the Town Council or the *Syndicat* arranges carefully

THE HARBOUR, LA ROCHELLE

the grouping of the colours as the boats come in and out—at any rate, one never sees anything in the slightest degree inartistic.

One of the advantages of La Rochelle is that it has its seaport at a distance—quite a pleasant place and not by any means spoilt by the presence of ships, for there is always a glory about ships, even though they be turret-ships and tankers, and there is an openness about La Pallice docks that one rather lacks in some of our busier ports.

La Rochelle, therefore, is allowed to remain dignified and picturesque, and any work that might seem at all dingy takes place at a distance.

I was amused at La Pallice at seeing the way in which they unload the hake, a salted variety. It is passed from hand to hand by stalwart fisherwomen in knickerbockers, as to whose personal appearance one feels inclined at first to make feeble jests, but it would be exceedingly dangerous to chaff them at all. A box on the ear with a hake would probably be something to be remembered. I presume that the hake is ultimately eaten, but one certainly does not like to think of it.

At the time of my visit there was a great trawler strike at La Rochelle, and the docks were filled with trawlers laid up, though every now and then one saw what I suppose was a "blackleg" going out. That was my last view of La Rochelle—a "blackleg" trawler picking its way out of the dock, gloriously beautiful fishing-smacks coming in and out on a light breeze in their browns and blues, and last, at the railway station, a very tall horned coif, coming from somewhere, no doubt, in the neighbourhood.

A most interesting document which deals with the

"Siege of La Rochelle" was published not very many years ago. It is a contemporary journal of the siege from July 1627 to July 1630. The author of it was certainly a very principal person, no doubt a member of the Council, but his actual name is unknown.

The earlier part deals chiefly with the attack of the English upon the Ile de Ré, and with the various negotiations with the English which resulted in alternate hopes and disappointments. The story of the attack upon St-Martin de Ré is told in great detail, but the remainder of the diary is a tale of sad disappointments. The English fleet arrived on the 28th September, 1628: three times it forms into order as if ready for an attack; the fourth time it fires a few guns and sails away, and from there onwards the diary becomes merely a sad tale of famine and misery. There follows the story of the surrender, of the wild joy of the starving people when they found that the King was disposed to be generous, of his entry, preceded as it was by a large convoy of provisions, and of the beginning of the demolition of its great walls.

Englishmen will read with sorrow a story of their own incompetence, if it was incompetence, or if not, what was much worse, their failure to redeem a promise.

Another striking siege document is the *De Profundis* of La Rochelle.

If ever there was a *cri de cœur* this little book is one. It does not support Dr. Johnson's famous contention that true sorrow cannot express itself in artificial form. Nothing could be more artificial than these four-line stanzas, beneath each of which is printed in heavy type a word, a phrase, in Latin, from the psalm whose title it bears; and most cunningly each such phrase or word completes the stanza. One feels, therefore, each

such close of the stanzas to be a kind of heavy knell; and so in sober truth they all were. I wonder if the anonymous writer (it is described as "Envoyé à l'Illustrissime Roy d'Angleterre—Par un Courrier Réformé") wrote another poem on the text "Put not your trust in Princes!" It is undated, but the date we can supply.

I attempt a few translations from this very human document.

It opens thus—La Rochelle herself speaks:

Prince, since to thee, so good and great,
  Best of all earthly kings! I write,
Oh, leave me not thus desolate!
  I call, from out this darkest night—
                Out of the deep!

Woe, woe is mine, and sore distress.
  No joy, no happiness I know,
Since, year by year, all respiteless,
  (Though none would look upon my woe)
                I called!

To France I look for help in vain;
  I see no hope of succour there;
To thee, in this my bitter pain,
  I flee—in this my last despair—
                To Thee, O Lord!

Thou hast no town as me so fair,
  And I am thine, if so wills't thou
Turn not deaf ears to this my prayer!
  Oh hear, oh hear! my cry, my vow,
                Lord, hear!

Men say—it is my heaviest groan—
  That this my prayer will have no power
To move thee, more than 'twere a stone!—
  And that thou scorn'st, in this dread hour,
                My voice!

(There follow more sorrows; there were troubles within; the defenders think less of defence than of prize-money. Here the writer suggests that he is himself one of the Council of Defence; and he evidently does not think much of his colleagues. No help in them!)

But now comes a little ray of hope:—

> One thing alone gives cause for hope;
> A fortress not so strong as mine—
> Montauban—now a year doth cope
> With siege: a year th' encircling line
> Withstands!

Then an appeal is made to Britain's naval prestige:—

> Thou canst indeed assuage my woes;
> For thou canst sink, if 'tis thy will,
> These vessels, galleys—rows on rows—
> For thy fleet is more mighty still,
> More plenteous!

Then follows a most strange threat, with which the "Complaint" ends. If the illustrious King of England will not listen, La Rochelle will call in the Turk! There will be a "crusade" (an upside-down one, so to say) and good respectable La Rochelle will march with her deliverers in a sort of Holy War of Vengeance against the two renegade kings—the King of France, because he attacks a city of his own realm; the King of England, for refusal to help her. Nay more: if I rightly understand the last stanza, good Protestant La Rochelle will make no bones about it and turn Mahommedan!

If the King of England ever got and read this "Out of the Deep" he must have been—if not alarmed, at least startled by this rather extraordinary proposal. But it did not help poor La Rochelle; we have seen how all too unhelpful the English fleet was.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ISLANDS

THE Ile d'Oléron, as compared with its more northern sister, the Ile de Ré, is more fertile, better wooded, and perhaps, in a sense, more tropical. Its holdings are small, as those of the Ile de Ré, and one finds constant little groups of neat homesteads, almost little hamlets, apart from the little towns and villages—and there are windmills scattered about. Whether Oléron boasts an olive—Ré has at least one—I cannot say. Oyster cultivation keeps a good many people busy, chiefly round Le Château and St-Trojan. Large numbers of these go on to Marennes, where they mysteriously turn green—a colour which might seem to add to the terrors of the oyster, but which actually adds to its flavour.

One need not speak of the seaweed industry. It is not only a manure but also yields stuffing for mattresses, and jellies which are used in jam-making. Elsewhere (in the Ile d'Yeu, for example) it is burned for its alkali. Apart from ordinary fisheries, there are large "locks" for trapping fish, which come in on the tide, and would like, no doubt, to "go out with the tide" (in the words of Barkis), but when they propose to do so, they find the way barred, and the water in the lock rapidly becoming shallow. Finally the fish must all take refuge in a channel by the walls of the lock, where men come and stun them with a sort of scimitar and pull them out.

The island is very accessible, either from Chapus or by the "long sea route" from La Rochelle to Boyardville. The railway system is simple, a line from end to end, with a branch to Boyardville (about the middle of the northern coast) from Sauzelle. St-Trojan, in the south-east, has two beaches, and an excellent pine forest —what more can one want? The flowers even recall the Azure Coast, the temperature is even. It is rapidly becoming a favourite bathing-place. The larger beach is on the "wild coast," and sometimes gets the full benefit of the waves which set the "Pertuis de Malmusson" groaning.

The chief centre of the island is St-Pierre, whither one will go if only to see the "Lanterne des Morts," of the thirteenth century. The market-square where it stands was once a cemetery. Elsewhere some account is given of other curious "Lanterns." The line goes on through St-Georges to its terminus at St-Denis. The churches are not very ancient—St-Denis has one of the sixteenth century; but there are other attractions—the lighthouse of Chassiron, the citadel of Le Château, built by Richelieu's orders, and fortified by Vauban.

The blowing up of the sand is a danger to parts of the island, as on the mainland. The forest of St-Trojan is one of the barriers of the growing dunes, which have, it seems, engulfed the old town of St-Trojan in their depths.

I advise everyone going to the Ile de Ré to go from La Rochelle, in order to enjoy the magnificent view of La Rochelle from the sea. Nay more: I urge all travellers to La Rochelle, at whatever loss of time, and perhaps of convenience, to arrive there by sea, either from Les Sables or from the Ile d'Oléron. La Rochelle is a sea-queen, and it is unjust to approach her beauties by the

railway station, however elegant a structure. The Ile de Ré steamer goes quite straight out, for some distance, no doubt to get comfortably through the cut made in Richelieu's dyke. Thus one has for a time the same view, and no doubt the most beautiful view, of the city and its towers. Then you make a right incline, and the view shifts and changes till you lose it.

Your first call is at La Flotte—a neat, pretty little place. A ruined abbey stands out on the cliff before you reach the port ; it is St-Laurent, and I need hardly say is of the twelfth century, as is the church of La Flotte itself. St-Martin, where you disembark, is also neat and pretty, but a busier place than La Flotte. Train, quay, Syndicat d'Initiative are all comfortably grouped together. There is a museum and a kinema ! But chief in interest is the fine old church, St-Martin's Westminster Abbey, where sleep the brothers Thoiras, slain in beating off the English in 1627, but yet victorious. Alas ! we did much damage then to the church, and I would like to see that damage repaired. There are parts of the old fortifications—for the church was fortified—and the remains of what was a fine tower ; but the old roof is gone, and the church has been repaired rather inadequately for want, no doubt, of funds.

With its fort, its barracks, and other important buildings, St-Martin's is quite a serious little town.

At St-Martin de Ré I was in a lonely street, when suddenly I was startled by a violent noise behind me—it was a kettledrum, played by the town-crier. As I was the only being about, he " cried " his cry at me, and I listened intently, and at the end (being up in etiquette books) made a slight bow, and he another to me. It was rather an Alice-in-Wonderland interlude. The burden of his message was that if you went to

Madame So-and-so's in Street So-and-so you could get something very admirable *tout cuit.* As I like my food cooked, I was anxious to go, but forgot the street. So I missed something very good—I wonder what? I suspect a special brand of cockles—or were they snails? Anyhow, I am sorry.

I often feel grateful for the impulse which prompted me to walk across the Ile de Ré and pick up the sluggish train on the far side. It was a good way of getting up an appetite for lunch, and a good way of seeing the rather dull country. The Ile de Ré is not as well wooded as its sister of Oléron—its pines are fewer, its general appearance barer. In fact, it looked as if the Rhétais spent their time trying to grow grapes of thistles, so overgrown so many of their vineyards look. That they succeed is evident when one tastes their excellent white wines. One looks over a wide expanse of fairly level ground, with the multitudinous dimple of the sea on the horizon, and in the foreground men and women bent over their work in that not over-graceful attitude which Millet nevertheless has rightly seized and immortalized as the characteristic attitude of the French peasant. They grow other things besides vines; here and there one sees a walled enclosure; these are the remains of a garden belonging to some great house which has long ago disappeared. In these gardens are grown fruits and early vegetables, which enjoy sunshine and shelter and the equable temperature of the island, as well, no doubt, as a good dressing of winter seaweed. Whether the seaweed flavours the vines or not I could not ascertain; if it does, I am all for seaweed.

Leaving St-Martin de Ré by its gate, and past its landward fortifications, I emerged on a rather dreary but quite interesting high-road; interesting, because I

was able to investigate the local methods of culture, and interesting too because of the odd things I met. The first of these was a donkey in a pair of blue fishermen's trousers; I say a pair because they were on the fore-legs only. The seat of the trousers had somehow been skilfully cut into strips so as to form combined trousers and braces. I felt distressed at the half-clothing of the animal, and almost stopped to offer a small contribution for another pair (brown, of course) on the hind-legs. But the donkey somehow looked so self-consciously pleased with what he had got that I felt it best not to suggest anything missing; where ignorance was bliss it might be folly to be wise. The next thing I met was a most astonishing monster on the chassis of a Ford car, projecting from a garage. This sight made me recollect that I was near the Rabelais country, and must be startled at nothing prodigious. The monster turned out to be a gigantic swan, but without the coverings of its wings, which had possibly been sent to the wash. I presume it is the emblem of the Island Musical Society (*Harmonieux Enfants de l'Ile de Ré*) which goes before them in their solemn processions, possibly as a reminder to a certain portion of the members that

> Swans sing before they die; 'twere no bad thing
> Did certain persons die before they sing.

Almost immediately after I met a horse dressed in the family patchwork quilt; holes were cut for the straps of the harness. Farther on another horse, wearing what was quite obviously only a feminine bathing-dress; still, it *was* a bathing-dress. Then I met a mule with—of course—nothing on at all.

The intelligent reader will have grasped, what had begun to dawn on me, that these garments were intended

to save the animals from the flies. I inquired, on my return, of an experienced horseman his opinion, and he assured me that flies only torment standing animals—those in movement may be a little irritated, but no more , and that the heat of the clothes must be a much greater torment than even the flies. So I hope to start soon a Society for the Prevention of Supposed Kindness to Animals.

A short visit to Couarde, which has a really fine stretch of beach, occupied me till the supposed time of arrival of my train. When I got to the shed which serves as a station I found a crowd gathered, children in various degrees of mahogany or chocolate, all over, as far as one could judge, and their elder sisters equally chocolate to a certain point, one might say a considerable point, where an edge of pink became visible. All these people presumably wanted to get to some destination, and most have been hungering for lunch ; but they made much merriment over a real or supposed derailment of the train, and bandied to and fro some very subtle joke, evidently thought to be a good one, about there being some Englishman aboard who was saying " onz' heures," " six francs," in such a fashion as to throw the train off its balance. I could not understand this joke ; the supposed Englishman pronounced precisely as I did, and I have always thought I did it rather well. But I shall be cautious at least of those particular phrases when in any wheeled vehicle. There was indeed an Englishman on the train when it at length steamed in, but he was a very mild and inoffensive person who would, I am sure, throw nothing off the rails. The train jolted and swayed through acres of salt-drying swamps, and set me down, exhausted, and it must be owned a little piqued on the linguistic side,

at Ars-en-Ré. There I lunched well, beginning, as in an island, with various odd cockles and mussels, and then going on to some admirable toad-stools. How used one gets to making a hearty inroad on these strange foods, and then waiting patiently to see which of the company will die first. But you do not die; only you are conscious of a comfortable feeling inside. Perhaps it is the white wine of the country.

At Ars there is an odd little port and some beautiful old houses, and also a bit of a quite old arcade. The church is very fine; part is of the twelfth century, and it has a fine spire, a little out of the straight. It is said to be of English construction, and remarkable for its elegance and solidity; we hope that these are standard English qualities. The island was, of course, an English fief in the twelfth century, and again after the peace of Bretigny. Later on the island was often in dispute, and Buckingham was beaten off by the island hero, Thoiras, in 1627. Beautiful, certainly, the spire is, and it is pleasing to know that the English constructors are not to be held to account for its want of straightness (also, we hope, an English virtue), but a stroke of lightning. Inside the church is a very fine carved wood altar. The spire is partly blackened, to help the fishermen to harbour. One often finds towers and spires marked thus.

Ars is at the wasp's waist of the island—left to itself it would by now have been two islands.

One may go on to the extremity of the island, to the Phare des Baleines and to Les Portes. One can lunch well both at Ars and also by the Lighthouse; the farther you go the more likelihood of lobsters. The little train will, if you give it time, take you to Sablonceaux for the La Pallice boat.

A recent writer has collected some of the legends and folklore of the island. His stories are perhaps not very original, as they centre round rather familiar ideas; the treasure chest, which you can see, but which brings you dreadful disaster if you once grapple it; the fisherman who would not go to the Christmas midnight Mass, but went to gather seaweed instead; he sees a very terrifying procession of old-world ghosts, and becomes a reformed character, being "purged," like the tragic hero of Aristotle, "by pity and fear."

Still, all folklore, all local tradition or story, is deeply interesting, and whether it be the trousered donkeys, or what, one does somehow feel most distinctly on an island both in Oléron and Ré, though both are so near the mainland, and a strange atmosphere seems to be about one. The stories of M. Girandeau are valuable not so much for the anecdote itself as for the general picture they give us of island (especially of their own island) life. Folk-tales chiefly centre round the great mysteries—death, the after-life, the spirit returning to its earthly abode, these appear constantly; but there is also much tender humanity and sympathy, "like a breath of scented limes," wafted to us in these simple little tales. Here is a picture of an old house—"the white front with its rounded door, whose sculptures were almost disappearing under thick layers of whitewash, brightened up in the summer by the leafage of a vine with twisted trunk and by the gay tints of rambler roses growing at the foot of the wall."

As for the sea, there are sirens to be heard—if you go to the right place; but the concert of the sirens will end in tragedy. There is history—the Revolution and the reign of the Goddess Reason finds its way at length even to the Atlantic islands; there are committees, fiery

speeches are delivered, the church is invaded, the great crucifix is thrown on a bonfire ; there is an explosion of alcohol, the iconoclast is terribly burnt and dies in agony.

One need not add that the Devil plays a great part in these simple legends.

I did not visit the Ile d'Yeu, though on a previous occasion I endeavoured to get rooms there. I imagine that the accommodation is booked up well in advance. But it hardly belongs, except in language, to Poitou. The island, geographically, and in virtue of its prehistoric remains, is Breton, and the inhabitants are we know not what, but probably a race apart—it may be from the south. It has a ruined castle (at Vieux-Château) and a church of the eleventh century (St-Sauveur), and its climate is reputed to be kindly. It has a fine rugged south-west, or "wild," coast, with fine granite cliffs. Unlike Oléron and Ré, which are really bits of mainland, Yeu really is in and of the sea—has its distant fisheries, as well as the sardine industry about its coasts. Seaweed is generally burnt for its iodine, and there is a good breed of island ponies. The islanders also do a good business in crabs and lobsters, a trade more constant than that of the sardine, which is a tricksy, disappointing animal, and rejoices in bringing a whole population to the brink of ruin (or over it) and then letting itself be caught in such overwhelming quantities that the factories cannot deal with them. Whenever we eat one let us reflect what misery it may have caused.

CHAPTER XV

FONTENAY AND THE FOREST

ONE of the best centres of Poitou is Fontenay, called Fontenay-le-Comte, but during the Revolution known as Fontenay-le-Peuple. It is convenient for a very large district indeed. There are the fens, there is the forest, and there is the *bocage*—all of the greatest possible interest.

It is not really easy to describe the *bocage*, which lies rather to the north and north-west of Fontenay, but this is a stretch of country which is undulating and covered for the most part with a low scrub, with every here and there groups of fine trees, chiefly oaks, and clearings for small farms among the shrubs.

The chief centre of the *bocage*, which is all history by reason of the part it played in the wars of the Vendée, is Pouzauges. It is an admirable centre for *bocage* excursions. Its church is, as so many are, of the twelfth century. It has the remains of what was a huge castle of the thirteenth century, and where there is now a promenade built upon the old walls; but the chief joy of Pouzauges is the keep, covered with ivy, which is one of the various scenes associated with the name of Bluebeard, who is thought to have been actually a certain Gilles de Retz or Rais. I certainly had another castle, of another Bluebeard, pointed out to me some

PLACE BELLIARD, FONTENAY-LE-COMTE

time ago from Poitiers, so perhaps the Landru type is not really, or was not, so very uncommon in France.

Tiffauges also is one of the interesting centres of the *bocage*, and it also has a castle that belonged to this Gilles de Retz—in fact it was at Tiffauges that he committed his atrocities. Perhaps one need hardly say that the castle was dismantled by Richelieu, who seems to have had a very strong objection to anyone having a castle within a hundred miles of his own.

Bluebeard

How many students—even casual readers—of history, who have all heard of "Joan of Arc," and all equally heard of the famous "Bluebeard" of the gruesome nursery story, ever think to connect the two? [1] Yet, incredible as it may seem, Bluebeard was actually commissioned by Charles VII to guard and watch over the Maid: he fought by her side; he stood by her at the Coronation at Rheims, and was there created (at twenty-five years of age) Marshal of France!

Gilles de Retz or de Rais, later of Tiffauges, was born at Machecoul in or about 1404. He was brought up in rather a casual and careless way by his grandfather, who married him off at sixteen years of age to Catherine of Thouars, who, if the nursery tale be right, must have been his first victim, on whom he tried his 'prentice hand. But the nursery tale is probably only right in the picture of Gilles as a wholesale assassin—and even that came later.

Bluebeard must have been a mirror of knighthood at the degraded Court of the Dauphin, where they made merry with a merriment born of despair, while silently

[1] It has of course been done for them—by Bossard and by Shaw.

on the horizon dark clouds "piled the dim outline of the coming doom." Then, of a sudden, from distant Domrémy comes the Mysterious Maid; she sees, she conquers; and Bluebeard is given her as her guardian and champion! As far as indications serve, he was a true and loyal champion.

At twenty-six, Joan having passed in flame, Gilles is in his lonely castle at Tiffauges, spending extravagantly, keeping more than baronial state, studying deeply, and making his castle a home for clergy and poets.[1] His domestic chapel was enriched with incalculable treasures —everything is splendour and magnificence, till one day Gilles made the discovery which Mr. Micawber also made about income and expenditure. Suddenly he becomes miser; he starts sales of all his property; the King himself intervenes—in vain. Gilles, now poor, takes to alchemy, and hopes to find a way to turn his fortunes back to gold again. Need we say that he becomes the prey of every kind of knavish impostor? It is not long till they have led him on to a long series of almost incredible crimes. He became what we should call a dangerous monomaniac; murdered first a young boy, and, thereafter, boys and girls without number. It is a ghastly "Pied Piper of Hamelin" story. A diabolical old woman entices the children by kind words to the edge of a forest; then they disappear, to be worked up—portions of them, at least—into gold!

It is the Bishop of Nantes who tracks the murderer down. At the trial Gilles first blustered, then wept. The heart of his judges softened at the sight of the prisoner yesterday defiant, to-day, apparently, a broken man. Suddenly Gilles poured forth in a terrible out-

[1] Was it perhaps the murder of the Maid that ultimately unhinged his mind? One would like to think so.

burst of penitence the incredible story of his crimes: then he broke down again in a torrent of tears. The whole court knelt down and prayed for the murderer! Sentence of excommunication is pronounced; but contrition has disarmed all ecclesiastical vengeance, and it is amid an almost sympathetic court that the Civil Power—to whom Gilles, as having made good his crimes against Heaven, is now handed—pronounces, on the score of the murders, the sentence of death on a criminal who hails his coming torture as a glorious expiation! That is, in brief, the true but quite incredible story of Bluebeard, champion and guardian of Joan of Arc!

At Fontenay there was a market going on, and I seized the opportunity to buy some socks. It was a very elaborate business indeed. There was a little girl, who had to be sent to scour the whole market-place to get me change, and a dear old man, who seemed about ninety, who was the salesman, dismissed me with a warm handshake and what, apparently, was his blessing. I suppose I must have paid a very considerable price for the goods. Unhappily everything is wrecked in these delightful old French towns to-day by the incessant noise of the motors. The contents of the stalls are no longer brought in little donkey-carts but in huge camions from Paris—except, perhaps, the produce, which does seem to be local. There was a magnificent array of coifs. Evidently market-day was, as it naturally would be, a great day of meeting one's relatives, and one heard resounding on every side of one the triple kiss which is always exchanged. One comes across two, one on either cheek, fairly often, but I suppose this threefold kiss is based on some ancient idea that, in the words of the Latin poet, "The gods like an uneven number."

Conspicuous in the city of Fontenay is the fine church

of Notre Dame, with a tenth-century crypt. The upper church has been a good deal rebuilt and restored, but has some good flamboyant work and a beautiful spire. One gets charming views of bits of the church from the narrow side-streets. One cannot escape Richelieu; he had a conference of clergy here in 1628, and tried to have the Bishopric of Maillezais shifted to Fontenay.

The ruins of the old castle, which had the honour of sieges by St-Louis and Bertrand du Guesclin, are seen in a wild and picturesque park. There are some excellent houses and some arches in the Place Belliard. In the Rue Pont aux Chèvres is the ancient priory of St-Hilaire. Other good houses are in this street and above, by the church, and also in the Rue Guillemet. There is a very fine fountain, called the Fontaine des Beaux Esprits, or des Quatre-Tias (= *tuyaux*), built in 1542. Fontenay was a famous centre of literature and learning, and François I himself called it "The Fountain of Beaux Esprits," to commemorate which proud title the actual fountain was appropriately built. The Rue Rabelais commemorates the sojourn of Rabelais, admitted to the priesthood when with the Cordeliers. He escaped thence to take refuge with the Benedictines at Maillezais.

There is a modern château, but not very modern, built in 1600 by Jean Morisson, whose house is in the Place Belliard, for Nicolas Rapin, author of the *Satire Ménippée*. On to this château were grafted, and into it were imported, portions of the great château of Coulonges-sur-Antise, chiefly two very fine chimney-pieces. It was the much-loved home of Rochebrune, the celebrated etcher and water-colour painter. I was fortunate in seeing this castle, which is not in the ordinary way shown to visitors. Not being certain if

one might see it, I was wandering up and down the street which leads to it, and where there is a fine tower, up which one may climb, trying to find someone to ask, when a shutter was thrown open and out looked—Helen of Troy. While I remained rather dazed at the apparition, and began to mutter lines from Marlowe, fortunately Helen's homely but practical mother appeared, and wisely suggested my going boldly to the château and ringing the first available bell. During the conversation I was able to observe a very interesting Poitevin interior, arranged in the usual way, and neat and tidy to perfection.

The first bell I reached happened to be the stable bell, which clanged noisily, and was answered by the owner himself, who most kindly showed me over the interior, and then let me wander about the grounds and get different aspects of this quite perfect little Renaissance gem. The Nine Muses (appropriately for Fontenay, home of the Muses) adorn the façade. It is, however, the ends, not the front, which are of peculiar perfection.

From Fontenay one can make many excursions. One of the longer ones will take you to Ardelay (about sixty kilometres), where is the very lovely cloister of the Abbaye de la Grainetière. At sixty-six kilometres you are in the midst of the *bocage*, at Les Herbiers, and you may climb to the top of the Mont des Alouettes, a "peak" of the "Vendée Alps," where is an unfinished chapel built by the Duchesses of Angoulême and de Berry to commemorate the Vendée wars—fought, in great part, in the *bocage* country.

The Forest of Mervent is within easy reach of Fontenay. The Forest of Vouvant lies north of it. The church at Mervent is a very old agglomeration, some of it being without doubt extremely old. The

castle stands very boldly on its escarpment, but there is not much left except the very picturesque ivy-covered ruins which overshadow the valley.

Outside the blacksmith's I saw, perhaps for the first time, what I believe is called a *travail*, and I remembered learning in my boyhood, in one of the first pieces of French grammar that I was ever taught, that this word makes its plural in "ls" when it means a kind of enclosure for shoeing unruly horses. Here, therefore, was a *travail*, but as I have never seen another, and as it would be very rare to find two in the same village, I have never yet had occasion to use its plural. I am told there is an English grammar for unfortunate Danish children which explains that "man" makes its plural "men," but that "cayman" makes an irregular plural, "caymans." I imagine that the information about the *travail* was just about as useful as this.

Vouvant is built on a promontory round which the Mère runs in a sort of horseshoe. Of the castle there is still left the keep that is called the Tower of Mélusine. The church is well known as one of the most striking of the Romanesque buildings of this district. It has also a good crypt, but perhaps its best feature is its side-door, of which the sculptures are rightly celebrated.

Le Père de Montfort

If one is wayfaring in Poitou one cannot help coming on the tracks from time to time of another wayfarer, who indeed covered a very large part of the district in his strange missionary career. It is in the Forest of Mervent that one finds the famous grotto, visited by thousands of tourists to-day.

Montfort led a very strenuous life, and he had need, of course, of quiet and solitude. He had seen the

beautiful meanderings of the Mère. He was, as we know, a great lover of nature, constantly calling his converts back to the beauty and grace of nature in order to win them from their often too sordid lives. Montfort found a certain rock called La Roche aux Faons as most suitable for building his little grotto. It is, indeed, in a charming position, with a little stream close by, and he had therefore all that one could need. There, then, he settled, but he found that his grotto was unfortunately too open to the winds of the north, and that, hardened as he was, his health was unable to support the cold winds. He therefore called upon the inhabitants of Mervent, whose church he had been restoring, to build him a protecting wall. Then he furnished his little grotto, made a small garden, and settled down for a brief period of hermit's life. Unfortunately he had omitted certain formalities in taking possession of this little part of the forest, and though on his side he believed that he was entitled to the ground by an arrangement with the owner, an opportunity was given to his enemies to cause trouble, and ultimately he was obliged to abandon his beloved grotto, but his memory lingers round about it and it became a regular place of pilgrimage.

Who was this strange hermit? He was not born in Vendée, but came from Montfort, not far from Rennes. It was, however, in Poitou that the best of his work was accomplished. It is a strange story, as he was indeed a strange man. Physically he was as strong as a giant. He made most of his journeys on foot, and was able to support all kinds of hardships. He had, besides, one of the most remarkable gifts of attracting —or, as we call it, magnetizing—his fellow-beings. Wherever he went he became a power, and he found,

therefore, his vocation in going from place to place stirring up and, as we may say, re-evangelizing towns, villages, islands alike. We find him, for instance, all over Poitou, in the Ile d'Yeu, at Fontenay, at Mervent, and finally at St-Laurent-sur-Sèvre. It was in 1701 that he entered the city of Poitiers, a humble traveller, sent by the famous penitent, Madame de Montespan, to ask for a canonry, but on the way into the city he goes to pray at the chapel of the big hospital. His deep fervour attracts the attention of the patients, and they insisted that he should remain among them as a sort of unofficial director. He does so. The hospital, apparently, was in a very bad way indeed. There was no discipline, little religion, perpetual quarrellings, and a great deal of cruelty. In less than no time he had altered all that. Perhaps those writers are right who think that Montfort's power among the poor came from the fact that he was literally as poor as they. He took no pay for his work. He fed with and like the rest, and he insisted upon the worst room in the house, and that must indeed have been something very bad. But he was never one to stay too long at one work—not that he was without power of organization. He saw, in his work at the hospital, that he must have some very definite rules for those who either as nurses or as attendants had the care of these poor people. He founded, therefore, his great order of hospital sisters called the Order of Wisdom. It was in Poitiers, therefore, that the famous Congregation of Wisdom took its origin, and whence it spread on its magnificent work through every hospital of the land. Its chief house is at St-Laurent.

Montfort was a born orator, and he must have been somehow conscious of the power both of his speech and

of his example among the more degraded classes of his people. He went into one of the lowest quarters of Poitiers, and he set to work to reorganize and reform the life of the quarter. The fact is that he succeeded marvellously. It is said that in quite a short time the district gave up its jealousies, its idleness, its blasphemy. It was part of Montfort's system to leave always some visible memorial of his work. He built, therefore, a little chapel, raised largely by the hands of his converts. Other missions were held in other parts of the city, and it was only when his enemies became too strong for him that he was obliged to leave those among whom he had worked so nobly.

He goes to Brittany, but, always anxious for the south, he comes back to La Rochelle. There he found a large garrison of soldiers. It was not long before he had them marching in solemn procession through the town, a cross at their head, chanting the litanies of the Blessed Virgin. On one occasion he ventured into a low dancing-hall. The dancers were surprised to see a priest, clothed almost in rags, kneeling in their midst. The hall was deserted from that time onward.

If we follow him through all his wanderings we shall cover the greater part of the district which is dealt with in this book, but it is quite marvellous to read the number of his missions and to realize the immense amount of work and strain which they must have caused him. He was always attacked by Jansenist enemies and seldom was able to stay any great length in one place. It was found that when he had held a mission the shopkeepers sold not so much medals or even chaplets but what were known as "disciplines," with which the penitents would scourge themselves. At La Rochelle and on the Isle of Aix the soldiers would hide behind

the church to administer to themselves correction for their sins.

It is always pleasant to think of Montfort in the grotto of Mervent, because to his enthusiasm and zeal he added an extraordinary sanity, and he loved, as few else have loved, nature and was always calling upon his converts to learn to love her too. He was buried where he died, at St-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, which all true wayfarers should visit.

Mélusine

It is in the forests of Mervent and Vouvant that one comes closest to the fairy Mélusine, who is to Poitou what Esterelle is to Provence, save that Esterelle is really more human and less faery than her northern sister. Moreover, Mélusine has something in common with another of the legendary beings of Provence—the Golden Goat ; for she too, like the Goat, is a guardian of ancient ruins and hidden treasure.

Visitors to Vouvant will admire the picturesque old tower, part of the baronial castle—all, indeed, which remains in any sort of integrity, which bears the fairy's name.

Alas, for all fairies ! The rationalist historians have tracked them down more ruthlessly than the bold hunters tracked down the mysterious White Harts of the forest, and have pierced them with as cruel arrows. Mélusine, we are told, was but a daughter of the House of Mervent, who by marriage to Raymondin of Poitiers united the estates of Melle and Lusignan, whence her "portmanteau" name. Dowered not only with the "fatal dower of beauty," but also with other gifts less perilous—wisdom, initiative, power to command, artistic sense, a great turn for architecture—she was indeed

the great lady, the builder of towers and castles and churches, and, as there were in those days no builders' strikes, no malingering bricklayers, she (in army phrase), "got things done" with a speed which seemed miraculous then, and may well seem more miraculous now.

Yes, this is all very well. But yet the obstinate question will arise—Where did she get her tail? For the very centre and heart of the Mélusine legend is that she was woman indeed above, but "tailed off," alas! into a cold and coiling serpent. A good deal of the responsibility of the tail rests with the old chronicler Jehan d'Arras, whose excuse must be that he composed the story (I avoid an obvious pun) to order. Did he spin it out of a fertile brain, a story-loving inner consciousness? Perhaps. Perhaps also he had got hold of some other stories, which he wantonly intermingled with the legends already clustering about the name of Eustache Chabot. He makes his heroine a daughter of some king of Albania—Adriatic Albania, Asian Albania, Scottish Albany—who can say? In Asian Albania, says Herodotus, they went in for "woman-serpents." At any rate, her mother, Pressine, carries her off with her twin sisters, for she was one of a triplet, to the Isle of Avalon. It is at least interesting to find that Jehan, perhaps, like many a paid journalist, "gravelled for lack of matter," dips into Celtic legend, as into a sort of lucky bag, and draws out what comes to hand. But perhaps those are right who think that, wheresoever Jehan drew his lore, the basis of the legend is genuine Poitevin. Mélusine's connexion with Lusignan is none too clear, but she became its legendary foundress as she became the legendary builder not only of the castle at Vouvant but also of the glorious old church at Parthenay-le-Vieux, which she built in three nights, save

for one last stone, the want of which has left a gap for ever. She was a capricious builder; elsewhere (at St-Paul-en-Pareds) she kept shifting the masons' work from the site they had chosen to one which she (for no particular reason, or, as one might say, for some mere feminine reason) preferred. These freaks really rather spoiled Mélusine's reputation, and she finishes up a sort of common witch upon a common broomstick.

She is, at any rate, the presiding genius (or, in the *Arabian Nights* language) genie, of building generally. She is the incarnate spirit of what we call "hustle" or "drive." But she also guarded and cared for her castles and churches. It is thought that her serpent's tail merely represents the idea of the "underground," the excavations which must precede all sound building, even if you are going to complete it in three days. In any case, she remains, despite tail and ultimate broomstick, an airy picture of a rich and powerful but gracious mediaeval lady—one who, we may feel, not only built great castles but also solved the housing and the overcrowding problems for her vassals. And is she not also the incarnation of the spirit of mediaevalism in general? Something of the earth earthy, but growing up into beauty and movement and grace? And is she not, as well, the picture of the glorious province of Poitou which gave her, and her legend, birth?

CHAPTER XVI

THE FENS, MAILLEZAIS, LUÇON

THERE are two kinds of fens in the Poitou district—one, those near the sea-coast, in the region of Luçon, and the other round about Maillezais, and stretching thence south and south-east to Coulon.

I have already said something about my experiences at and around Coulon, but I also invaded them from the other direction so as to get a fairly general idea of them, and in addition to see something of the celebrated abbey where Rabelais was in refuge some time after he left the Cordeliers.

I passed through the singularly dull little place called Benet, but which, none the less, has a very fine Romanesque façade and a very good Gothic interior to its little church. As I have already said, it is extremely difficult to come upon any little French place that can boast of any sort of antiquity without finding something of interest there. Besides the church there is at Benet some sort of relic of the old castle, or at any rate of the walls which surrounded it.

Not far thence is Neuil-sur-l'Autise, which is a small place, but celebrated as being the original home of the famous Eleanor of Guienne. There are remains of an abbey, but the church is one of the most beautiful in the whole of Vendée, dating from the eleventh century, with three aisles, as we should call them, each finishing with

an apse, the apse being modern, and with an excellent Romanesque cloister on the south, with fine sculptures and tombs. There is besides the chapter-house of the abbey, which, though twelfth century, has been rebuilt. A farm now represents the remains of the old castle.

Maillezais is particularly charming. Its abbey is of the tenth century, and there is an old castle close by. The remains of the abbey church are singularly picturesque, and by inquiring at a farm to which the ruins belong one is allowed to wander over it. The mixture of Romanesque and Gothic is particularly well blended. The two square towers are quite old, and there is the old eleventh-century wall of the nave. You go up a narrow staircase, and then, if you have a sufficiently good head, you can cross the remains of a ruined window and get to the main portion of the abbey and so look down, as well as up, upon the ruins. I had no difficulty in crossing this narrow and rather rough passage, but in coming back it took a good deal of passing. There were men working down below, and for a moment I had serious thoughts of calling to them to come and play the part of what I believe is called in India a *shabash-wallah*, or the man who goes round when there is work going on and encourages the workers by cries of "Bravo!" "Well done!" In other words, though fairly well accustomed to climbing, I had turned completely dizzy, and it was only the thought that by calling in even such encouragement from the Frenchmen working below I should drag the honour of Britain in the dirt that nerved me to make the crossing again.

One meets, of course, Rabelais so constantly in this country, and so constantly, also, comes across little natural features that are described by him, that there ought to be a special chapter to deal with Poitou as the

THE ABBEY, MAILLEZAIS

country of the great cynic, but we must just be content with finding him here and there. Perhaps I may say that at Maillezais some reminiscence of Rabelais still seems to linger, because I certainly was given a Gargantua's chop for lunch, and wished I could have borrowed Gargantua's mouth first.

There is a good historical account of the Abbey and Cathedral of Maillezais, well illustrated, in *Cathedrals and Cloisters of Midland France*, by Elise Whitlock Rose, vol. ii (Putnam's Sons, 1907). There will also be found there a good general account of the Cathedrals of Poitiers, Saintes, St-Pierre, and Luçon, where the Episcopal Palace and Garden receive specially careful treatment.

One great advantage of France is that any place, however dull, may constantly be enlivened by some interesting procession or show of some unexpected kind. On my way to Luçon I not only left Fontenay having a festival procession (it was, I may explain, the 15th August), but even when I got to one of the dullest places in France, Velluire, where the railway therefore leaves you two or three hours to cool your heels, I found a very pretty little procession just parting from the door of the fine old Romanesque church, whose pillars have a very marked outward lean. Several little girls, dressed like little brides, had evidently been carrying the statue of the Madonna and were going home with their black-gowned and white-coifed mammas, but, alas! the glory of the procession soon faded and I was left to wrestle with the extreme dullness of Velluire, which is only partially relieved by the presence of a river.

Luçon is chiefly noted for its cathedral and for its public garden. This pretty little town was once the see of the inevitable Richelieu. There is a canal which runs to the sea, so that it has a little port of its own.

The cathedral is comparatively small and it is largely Gothic, but it has a good deal still of the thirteenth century and one portion left of the twelfth. I found a fair going on, and was able again to make a study of the local coifs. The flaring torches round the cathedral square made a very striking effect. My only quarrel with the fair was that it was extremely noisy and it became rather difficult to go to sleep.

Richelieu did attempt to live at Luçon and loathed it. He says that his house "is his prison," he "cannot light a fire for the smoke," and that he had "the most squalid and disagreeable Bishopric in France." Well, he was only twenty-two; he had more before him; and he was to light the flames of many a glowing fire yet.

Not far from Luçon is Mareuil-sur-Lay, which has a very fine old church and remains of a castle, but is better known, perhaps, for a peculiarly palatable, slightly sparkling wine.

CHAPTER XVII

LES SABLES D'OLONNE

FROM Luçon I made my way to the rival of Royan, Les Sables d'Olonne. This seems to be an extremely difficult journey, and one has a long wait at La Roche-sur-Yon. At this I did not grumble. It gave one an opportunity to see something of this extremely regular town, which, as many people will know, sprang into existence by the command of Napoleon.

The train I travelled in from La Roche to Sables was called a *train de plaisir*, but there was very little pleasure about it. Nothing would induce it to start, and it was extremely crowded, and they kept putting on carriages after carriages, and somehow managed to absorb a very large travelling population. The unfortunate children who were off to the seaside for the day were already tired out before we got started on the last lap of our journey, and the poor mothers were tearfully anticipating the return.

Elsewhere I think I have had occasion to exclaim upon the patience of the French, one of the most patient peoples in the world. One would be inclined sometimes to say that they had no go in them at all, and yet they invented the steamboat, and rose like a great tidal wave to sweep away the oppression of the old regime, but they never duck an engine-driver or hurry off a station-master to the signal-post. They just sit there and exchange an occasional weary joke.

However, we did arrive there at last, and at Sables, where I had French friends, I had a very amusing time indeed.

One of my early troubles there was a serious dispute with the old bathing-woman, and when I appealed to the proprietress I was told I must fight it out with the old lady. The horror of this prospect reduced me to tameness at once.

A great deal of Les Sables is, of course, quite modern. It is a humbler place than Royan—more, I should say, a place for the children, as Royan is more a place for the grown-ups. It has a splendid beach, as its name denotes, almost filled with little tents, and its surface broken by the castles and other buildings which the children are busily constructing.

Its port is perhaps the most charming part of the town, with the hamlet called La Chaume, which is on the other side of the entrance. It has quite a striking tower, which is none the less striking for being modern. There is a constant going and coming of little ships. Nothing is more pleasing than to see the sardine fleet beating into port. A straight run is not so interesting, but to watch them all trying to make their last long leg so as to strike the entrance is very amusing and interesting indeed.

At Les Sables one lives in very few clothes and all day on the beach. They claim that it is a peculiarly sunny place and I can well believe it. The sun seems always beating down upon one, but with the shadow of a tent and bathes at intervals one gets along very nicely, and it is a wonderful place for getting up an appetite.

It is not the slightest use, however tired you may be, trying to get to bed in a French watering-place before 12.30, or what they would call 0.30 (and it certainly feels

more like it)—at any rate in the season, just as it is impossible in Paris at any time. My friend was himself starting one morning at five and I also was catching rather an early train. We had had an extremely busy day, two long swims, and so we arranged among ourselves to leave the café quite early; but a special concert was being held, there was an extremely funny "funny man," and I need hardly say we did not get away till nearly one o'clock in the morning.

There was a striking incident showing the French swift and short way with things. A small boy at the next table to ours insisted upon talking in rather a shrill voice during the performance. The French rule is remarkable. You may make as much noise as you like during an orchestral piece (which happen to be the pieces which I always want to listen to), but you must not so much as whisper during a solo. Everybody, of course, frowned at this unfortunate child, chiefly unfortunate in the possession of a fond and foolish mother, and after one or two warnings had been given, and after the prima donna had retired two or three times majestically from the front of the stage—and she was, indeed, exceedingly majestic—off went the baby in the arms of the proprietor and in less than no time was hurried behind a distant glass door, where I have no doubt he was made very happy behind the scenes. From time to time people came to report to the mother that all was going well, but ultimately she took herself off, also scattering behind her most of her possessions: jewellery, money, and various oddments, that kept us quite busy collecting. Of the child, at any rate, we heard no more.

The infant of my party behaved with exemplary propriety and his mother with more than maternal tact, and at his usual hour of bedtime, despite the noise and

CHAPTER XVIII

THE VENDÉE WARS

TO follow the course of the Vendée wars would be beyond our scope, but some idea of them, so far as they fall within our geographical limits, may be gathered from a short account of one of the chief heroes of the Vendée, de la Rochejacquelein.[1]

But what a strange war it was! Here were poor oppressed peasants, crushed by the heel of feudalism, fighting under the leadership of their feudal lords against the glorious Revolution that had come to knock off their chains!

It seems almost like the procession in Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno* which cried, "Less Bread! More Taxes!" But, however topsy-turvy it seems to us, these heroic men and women did fight, in sober reality, for feudalism and for the King. They took immense risks. The Republicans did not spare those who fell into their clutches. But the peasants not only fought, but fought --think of it!—in the thick of the Revolution, with the gloves on, and under the old rules of chivalry and warlike forbearance of the days of yore.

There were other brilliant leaders, and it was really a war of leaders; the peasants, zealous and brave, had

[1] I have made use of the work *Henri de la Rochejacquelein d'après des documents inédits*, Paris, 1890; but I have also studied the other side, and there was no lack of heroes.

little idea of management; but in none is the spirit of the Vendée so summed up as in Rochejacquelein.

The Revolution made no appeal in the Vendée. It was necessary to force upon these dullards the new-found joys of liberty, fraternity, equality. Religion, moreover, must be rooted out like a noxious weed, and the glorious flowers and rare refreshing fruit of the Age of Reason must be taught to grow from this unwilling soil.

The early attacks were on the priests; then came the turn of the peasants, ignorant, but tenacious of their simple creed. One Ripoche, of Loroux, is promised freedom if he will hack down a cross. Once the hatchet is well in his hands, he lays about him with astonishing effect, and dies at length clasping the unharmed cross.

The death of Louis XVI was a terrible shock to the Vendéens; but they cried "Vive le Roi" and not "Vive la République!"

The real clash was bound to come soon. Leaders arise in the Angevin and Poitevin ranks, and Cathelineau drives the Republicans out of Cholet and captures the cannon which, as "Mary Jane," played a great part in the early wars; it had come from Richelieu. Other leaders are d'Elbée, Charette, Rochejacquelein. At first local forces merely occupy the centres nearest to them; but soon an army must be organized and some sort of military discipline established. Here was the fatal weakness of the "Whites," as the Royalists were ultimately called. They had courage and endurance beyond credence, but it was hard to build up and equip an organized force equal to the armies of the Republic. Devotion wins battles, but hardly wars.

Henri de la Rochejacquelein, son of the Marquis, colonel of a cavalry regiment, was attached to the King's

Guard. On the 10th August, 1792, he just escaped with his life, and was housed by a kindly Royalist. Somehow a passport was secured, and it was at Bressuire that he learnt of the King's death.

Henri and his cousin, the Marquis of Lescure, had reason to fear they would be ordered to command forces against the already restless Vendéens. He vowed rather to die; and presently—for he would not compromise his family—he found secret means to join the rebels, as we must now call them. Young, fair, "like an Englishman," chivalrous to the last degree, unselfish, unambitious, and of a sublime courage, he was a born leader of desperate men.

He arrived at Cholet at a critical time, and for once was inclined to despair, when a small band of stalwarts begged him to lead them. This little band formed the nucleus of an irregular army, which with shot-guns and hay-forks flocked to join "Mr. Henry," who made to them a speech worth all the "exhortations" which generals in Livy and Tacitus inflicted on their possibly bored troops · "If I go forward, follow! If I fall back, run me through! If I die, avenge me!" He wins a brilliant success, largely through his own "personal magnetism," at Les Aubiers; then his first thought is for munitions and equipment, and with his captures he falls back on Tiffauges and supplies the almost desolate "army" assembled there, which wins a really important victory at Beaupreau, a victory which put new life into the almost waning revolt.

Those who know Thouars and will imagine its walls still standing, will realize that its capture by assault was a feat of the greatest magnitude. The garrison is spared, property is respected; the brave defender of the town is allowed to depart with a safe conduct.

Parthenay is occupied without fighting, La Chataigneraie after a short but violent struggle; and the army moves on Vouvant and Fontenay. There the brave peasants meet defeat, and "Mary Jane" becomes Republican once more. But not for long—the Vendéens "come again," capture Fontenay, and, finding that "Mary Jane" was not among their spoils, pursue the retreating "Blues" and bring her back in triumph.

The revolt had now turned to serious warfare; and it would be long to pursue the Royalist forces in their struggle with the new troops sent against them under Westermann and Santerre. In June the Republicans fell back on Saumur, which they took care to fortify strongly—its own natural defences and its almost impregnable castle not seeming strong enough against the victorious Whites. The attack comes on the 10th June. It almost fails by reason of its too great dash; Henry, to rally his forces, attacks the camp of Varrains, throwing his hat over the entrenchments and calling on his men to fetch it out—himself the first in the game. The camp is taken; the Blues forced into the town; Henry, pursuing before all others, finds himself almost alone in Nantilly, presses on to the Place Bilange, and finds a battalion of fugitives, whom he summons to surrender! And they, astounded, lay down their arms before a party of two! Henry and his companion, La Ville-Baugé, hurry on to the Castle (the story becomes almost incredible) and actually turn the defenders' guns upon it! But now a troop has come up to support the party of two; the city is taken; 5,000 prisoners, still armed, are guarded by 140 horsemen, though, in fact, they do not actually surrender till next day.

Te Deum is sung in St-Pierre. The prisoners are spared. Among them is Quilineau, released on parole

at Thouars, and imprisoned by his own side at Saumur. He is released once more, only to find death at Paris, with his wife, who, refusing to survive him, cried aloud, "Vive le Roi!" at the tribunal.

It must be fairly allowed, that were not Henry's exploits and his chivalrous conduct confirmed even by his enemies, they would seem to be mere fragments of some old romance worthy to have stood upon the shelves of Don Quixote.

So far the Royalists had not elected a commander-in-chief. This now was necessary, and Cathelineau, a character as fine as Rochejacquelein, and with a greater organizing power, was elected. He refused, no doubt wisely, a suggestion to march to Paris, and marched to Nantes, leaving Henry behind to guard Saumur. At Nantes the new general was wounded, and on the 14th July, 1793, he died. None the less, the Royalists went on triumphantly, and captured Chatillon, held by the redoubtable Westermann. D'Elbée is appointed generalissimo, an unwise choice perhaps, and Rochejacquelein was left without command. None the less, as lieutenant to Lescure, he drove Turreau (who speaks somewhat slightingly of him in his *Memoirs*) out of Thouars. Next we find him negotiating for help from England—help which might, indeed, have turned the scale, but which never came. In the united march on Luçon Henry is given, as by right, the advance-guard. The attack was a sad failure; but the Convention was not satisfied, and demanded further successes, and, indeed, further atrocities. Santerre writes to suggest some sort of poison gas, "des fumées soporatives, et puis tomber dessus," and a chemist is set to work. Things, in fact, were beginning to look black for Feudalism and Royalty.

We must pass over a long spell of serious fighting, not without brilliant successes of the Vendéens. At Cholet they suffer a glorious defeat; Bonchamps and d'Elbée are mortally wounded; the remains of the army crosses the Loire.

There they are out of our territory, but there it was that Rochejacquelein, at twenty-two years, is elected generalissimo. It is no disgrace to him that he could not fill satisfactorily an almost impossible position. Henry himself declared himself unfitted for it, and this was no false modesty. He had all along disapproved of the northward trek, forced on the leaders by the peasants, who hoped for recruits in Brittany and English help on the coast. What bravery still can do it does. Henry wins a great victory at Château-Gautier, after fourteen hours' fighting. Klèber himself, the Republican leader, bears witness to his splendid valour, as well as his military science, both of which he was to exhibit again and again in the Brittany campaign, together with his almost Quixotic chivalry—wasted, too often, upon his enemies.

We find him at length a fugitive in the *bocage*, then reunited to Charette, who still maintained an army in being, and who was clearly disappointed at being thus superseded. On the 27th January he is on the Cholet road, awaiting a detachment of 400 Blues. He routs the force and with fifteen men pursues it. Two grenadiers are found in a field. Henry calls on them to throw their hands up; one offers his rifle as if in surrender, and fires as Henry takes it. The grenadier is sabred; the other is spared; "M. Henri t'a fait grâce." "Je vous fais grâce," indeed, were the last words Henry spoke.

I have selected this hero, among other heroes, as typical of the best of the spirit of the Vendée in these

turbulent and distressing times. It is no good wondering whether timely English help might (as at La Rochelle) have turned the whole movement into a triumphant success. Henry did his part, and did it nobly. Where he failed it was from causes outside his power. But he left an enduring memory, in that dreadful century, of valour and nobility, *sans peur et sans reproche.*

It was not with the death of de la Rochejacquelein, but with that of Charette, that the war really came to an end.

Henry, buried where he fell, lies now at St-Aubin.

CHAPTER XIX

PARTHENAY AND SANXAY

ANYONE who has read only a little about this district will know something of Parthenay, one of the most picturesque—perhaps the most picturesque—of all its towns. It is very difficult to find anything more beautiful than the old gate and bridge known as the Porte St-Jacques and the street called Fourteenth of July, which is certainly one of the most charming streets I have ever seen in France, or would be were it not for the unhappy fact that most of these old houses a short time ago were sold to their tenants, and they, being poor people and desirous of preserving them in the cheapest possible way, have slapped whitewash over the glorious brick and woodwork. One of the charms of this little street is that as you look up it, after winding in an odd way it just turns round and seems to disappear as if it has gone off the map; but if one does follow it one comes to the little Place of the Fourteenth of July, and not far on are the old ramparts and the castle, from which one has a singularly beautiful view. I will describe the street as I saw it.

Bantams in the foreground and various plants put out into the road to catch a drizzling rain. A cart standing on the right with its shafts down. Farther up a little donkey-cart, the donkey's ears keeping up a perpetual twitch. A curious-looking small boy was attending

the donkey; he was clothed in a gaberdine and very strange knickerbockers. Three other little boys were playing soldiers, one in a somewhat gaudy striped jersey. Two old women—one nearly filled the little narrow street—met a third crony carrying the rather inevitable umbrella; they held a long chat. Farther in the distance were two quite smart girls, in green skirts and carrying also umbrellas. The little street then wriggled round the corner, with a tree just where it disappeared and a cart with its shafts down just before the turn. In the foreground was one of the beautiful irregular timbered houses, a flower window-box, and other delightful touches of colour. Just for the moment—a most unusual thing—there was neither dog nor cat in view.

As one looks over Parthenay from the Place of the Citadel, one has the grey walls of the old citadel itself framing the picture. Below are bright gardens, grey and yellow houses, most with red tiles. On the right is just the back of the beautiful street of the Fourteenth of July, and I strongly advise everyone who walks up the street to go and look at the backs of the houses as well. In the centre are the round towers of the castle and the Porte St-Jacques. There is plenty of green both above this foreground view and to the right, where grow some lovely tall poplars. Left of the old gate is the new bridge, not by any means irritating, but it would be more picturesque and fit its surroundings better if it had a grey stone facing. To the right are the old walls of the city and the rock of the cliff, and then the river and its peculiarly vivid reflections. To the left of the new bridge, the upper part of a very fine old ivied mansion, and then to the left again the railway viaduct, which somehow does not spoil the general picture, with three good arches on one side and five on the other and a

PORTE ST-JACQUES, PARTHENAY

feed them in safe places. The goats were admitted to some specially delectable pastures, which were kept shut during the rest of the day. As a result, when the train came along, everything was in safety; at the first sound of the whistle they all ran to their feeding-places, only one goat which seemed to be peculiarly obstinate did nearly get caught.

At the station there is a very alarming notice which says that admission to the train is in the order of your ticket, and if there happens to be no room you cannot possibly be accepted, but your ticket will do duty for the next train, the train being, in my case, at 4.30 a.m. of the following day. Fortunately I was fairly high up on the list.

Sanxay

There was in Poitou—and lived to our own days—a born archæologist, le Père de la Croix. He was like a man with a divining-rod, and every now and then he twitched and said, "Roman ruins! Dig right here!" and the ruins came to light.

Of course there were indications; things were dug or ploughed up, but to him belongs the credit. Sanxay (it is really Herbord) is specially associated with his name. No one should miss it; but it is well to work the ruins up first, and to be able to study them intelligently in the short time which may be at the visitor's disposal. I myself put in a good deal of time there, and none of it was wasted.

The ruins are really (what so many things are foolishly called) unique. There is a temple, baths, a theatre. The temple is quite of its own kind, it has few of the marks of the ordinary Greek or Roman temple. Its central part (the *cella*) is octagonal inside, decagonal

outside: perhaps it had some little dome. The outer portion or portico forms a pure Greek cross. To the east the arm of the cross was prolonged, up to the principal entrance or gate. The ancient temple had its entrance east, our churches west. At Chassenon there are remains rather like those of Herbord, and there is possibly a third example, of which later. Round it all are four galleries, of the ordinary classical kind. Outside were two buildings, one the abode of the sacristan, the other had to do with the water system.

Now comes the problem of the Sanxay temple. From under the *cella* there runs, to the south-east corner of the precinct, what is certainly not a drain, because there are traces of a drain alongside, but an underground corridor, built just to man's height, and with a pointed arch (drains are usually round-arched). At Chassenon there is something of the same sort. Whatever is its purpose? One theory will be mentioned presently, but to be dismissed. Clearly its purpose was for some person or persons to pass unseen from under the *cella* to the outside of the temple, or the other way, without coming up at the principal entrance, where people would be passing in and out. I searched to see if this curious tunnel carried on farther, and I think it does not. But it is worth, perhaps, noticing that it goes straight in the direction of the theatre, and that anyone emerging at the south-east corner of the temple could coast along walls of other buildings, still unseen, and then pick up the road which leads to the river—not to the bridge—which probably was there provided with stepping-stones. But why this special link between temple and theatre? Well, that is another problem. I suppose we must just conclude that for some reason it was convenient for the officials to get to the *cella* unseen and unimpeded, and

to be able to appear there, and disappear, at will. One would like to think of some representation of Adonis rising from the nether world—but enough of theories.

The other buildings are easier to understand. There are the baths, a fairly elaborate and quite large establishment, and with the colonnades, the big halls, and the various hot and cold rooms and plunge bath. There is an unusual feature of a small swimming bath, through which the river water was made to run.

Le Père de la Croix rightly points out that these baths are fairly early; the baths themselves are not proportionately large; the amusement halls and open courts and terraces are. In other remains of baths there is a more even balance struck.

Next to the temple is a group of rooms which suggests the mediaeval convent beside its convent church. These are thought to be lodgings for the visitors—a sort of caravanserai. It is this building which really raises the question: What was this whole establishment doing there?

My own idea is that it was a "rest cure" or convalescent camp. The springs, indeed, are not thermal or therapeutic, but the site is pleasing and sheltered, and what with baths, theatre, and temple, especially if given over to some rather theatrical worship, the time would pass merrily enough.

The theatre has certain quite unusual features, owing to its making use of a natural site. The seats are cut in the rock, and were perhaps helped out with wood or turf; in this respect it reminds us rather of Dorchester. Its passageways are parallel to the stage wall: usually, of course, they ray out from a centre. The public clearly scrambled to their places.

Herbord was evidently a simple homely Roman

settlement where you did not expect the grand style of Orange or Arles. The theatre and the precincts of the temple would each contain about 8,000 persons: but where would they live, unless there were a large number of wooden buildings about also?

Le Père de la Croix thinks that the settlement was due to Herbord having been a centre of the Pictons. The Romans would naturally like to build an establishment on an important site of the conquered natives. This may be so. There were annual assemblies of the Gauls, and the Romans may have liked to keep these up, in their own fashion, during the pleasanter months of the year. The "hotels" would accommodate the Governor and his attendants. The temple must be before the date of Constantine, and all the buildings seem to be of the same original date.

M. Chauvet believes the temple to be a place of Cybele worship, which acquired special significance under the Empire. He thinks that the underground tunnel was for those who had been initiated by receiving the blood of a slaughtered bullock at the *cella* to pass unseen till they appeared before the waiting multitude. This may have been so. But as for the worship, I incline to my idea of Adonis, whom someone represented, rising in splendour, from the underground, and thus showing himself before the people in the precinct. The tunnel was then for entrance, not exit.

I have dwelt long on these ruins because of their especial interest. I urge tourists to see and study them, and to theorize on the spot, undeterred by the common misquotation that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing." It is a very useful thing, especially if it stirs one to acquire a little more.

CHAPTER XX

POITIERS AND THOUARS

FROM Parthenay I went to Poitiers, with which I already had made acquaintance. I shall say something presently of its buildings and some of the problems which are connected with them.

I was very comfortable at my hotel, but they had the rather irritating way of ordering everything that you wanted after meals, in the way of coffee or any form of drinks, by a loud bell rung in the courtyard. One got to know this bell language, which varied not only by reason of the number of the strokes but also by its softness and loudness. Coffee was " dot dash dot " quite quiet, and as one advanced in the direction of alcohol it got louder and more violent. When exceedingly loud it was quite clearly a *verre de dégustation de cognac très fin*, and everybody looked at you.

Poitiers is a place where one can spend any amount of time without ever feeling at a loose end. There is plenty to do, and one has no reason to regard a wet Sunday there as a terrible experience, as did the old sea-captain who, when interviewed by a journalist upon his most terrible experiences, replied that he had once spent a wet Sunday in Glasgow.

Where shall one begin, where end, in an account of Poitiers ? One can hardly be wrong in both beginning and ending with the most wonderful of Romanesque churches, Notre Dame. But a good deal else must be got in in the middle.

Poitiers is the ancient capital of the Pictons. It passed into English hands at the marriage of Eléonore of Guienne with Henry Plantagenet.

Charles VII held Parliament here and founded the University, before which Jeanne d'Arc was examined. She lodged at the Hôtel de la Rose, and the mounting-block she used is shown at the Museum.

The city played a great part in the Religious Wars, and saw the final scenes of the Berton Conspiracy, centred at Thouars and Saumur. At the Museum of the Antiquaries of the West may be seen the "finds" from Sanxay.

On one's ordinary route through the city one will first meet, after the Place d'Armes and the Hôtel de Ville, the fine tower of St-Porchaire, of the tenth century—a particularly remarkable example. Then comes the Palais de Justice with its wonderful tracery at the end of the Great Hall. The chimneys are constructed on a most unusual plan; they go first up, then outwards, and then in again, and so through the roof, and it is this management of the chimneys which enabled the architect to build the light and graceful traceries of the windows and the pretty turrets on either side.

Adjoining the Palais de Justice is the Tour Maubergon, forming, with the end of the Salle des Pas Perdus of the Palais, a group unsurpassed in France.

As one goes towards the river, passing the Hôtel Fumée, a splendid fifteenth-century building, down the Rue de la Chaîne, one passes the church of St-Germain, built on foundations of Roman baths, and then reaches the magnificent church of Montierneuf, dedicated in 1096. From the bridge close by you get a splendid

view which includes part of the old castle and of a bridge on the Clain.

Go back now again to the church of Notre Dame, almost, if not quite, unrivalled in Centre or Western France. It unites simplicity and elaboration in a beautiful harmony. The west end is of the twelfth century, later than the rest, and has an unusual richness. It is flanked by two very pleasing towers, in construction exactly like the Lanterns des Morts at Fenioux. There is a famous "Deposition" in the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre, and a famous statue, "Our Lady of the Keys," behind the High Altar. The tradition that she hid the keys from a traitor who was going to give them to the English is spoiled by the fact that the English already had them. But fiction is constantly much more picturesque than truth.

Dazzled by Notre Dame, we can go on to St-Hilaire—named, as we know, after the great doctor of the Church, bulwark against heresies, Arian or other. It is also a magnificent example of Romanesque, rebuilt from earlier buildings in the tenth and eleventh centuries. It has its central nave and three aisles on either side—a unique feature. There is tenth-century work in the transept. The choir, higher than the nave, has its central apse, and four chapels, giving a magnificent effect both inside and out.

Not far from St-Hilaire are remains of the ramparts, and from the Porte de la Tranchée along the Bordeaux road, and to its left, are the remains of the aqueduct of Roman Poitiers.

The cathedral is a remarkable assemblage of styles. I must confess the feature which has always most attracted me is its lofty stretch of the outer eastern wall; the architect has grasped wonderfully the possi-

bilities of mere wall, and it has a majestic effect. It is said that the present St-Pierre was begun by Eléonore of Guienne (who is almost as inevitable as, and more ubiquitous than, Richelieu himself). She was, as we have seen, wife of Henry II Plantagenet and mother of King John; she must therefore have had much evil to put up with on the one hand, and must have deserved everything good on the other. The original Romanesque building was therefore supplanted by a church of the rather vaguely called "Angevin" or "Plantagenet" style. (One special mark, by the way, of "Plantagenet" style is the vaulting of roofs; one sees an example in the parish church at Fontevrault.) In one way we may say that everything has gone wrong with St-Pierre. Gothic was on its way, and the architects did not seem to know exactly where they were. The façade and towers are, of course, clean Gothic. You go from the Gothic front to the splendid east Romanesque wall—a daring bit of work—broken by arcades topped by a gable and flanked by little cone-turrets. It may point to architectural weakness in my brain, but I can stand and contemplate that wall for a long time. It is not exactly a "sweet and lovely" wall, but it has the glorious dignity of the Cyclopean walls of the Acropolis of Athens and other Greek acropolis walls, or of those splendid buildings-up and facings of cliffs which one gets in old castles on precipitous spots—and not least in the fine castle of Cadzow near Hamilton, sung by Sir Walter Scott. The west end is excellent in all but proportion—it is not high enough. Inside is immensity, almost bareness; I cannot, as do some writers, deny it grandeur, and there is most glorious detailed work; the builders' work, at least, is magnificent.

But we have not nearly exhausted Poitiers yet, though Poitiers may be beginning to exhaust us.

There is the glorious church of Ste-Radegonde, the beautiful queen who fled the world and all that beauty and royalty might mean for her—how many women would make that sacrifice?—and became a great abbess.

Here we can get quite rid of *dixième siècle*, since Ste-Radegonde's was founded in the middle of the sixth century—it was the church of the Abbey of Ste-Croix which Ste-Radegonde founded, and was originally "St-Mary's-without-the-walls." It was rebuilt in the eleventh century—more of this modernizing! In the Chapelle of the Pas de Dieu is said to be the footprint of Christ Himself, appearing there to Ste-Radegonde. Down in the crypt is the sarcophagus of the saint and a tomb of two of her companions, who now rest in the crypt chapels.

It is a solemn little crypt. When I want to absorb the spirit of mediaevalism—and mediaevalism at its best—I shall go there and stand on the crypt stairs, first having read a good deal of Charles Péguy and a little Huysmans. The remains of Ste-Radegonde are not in the sarcophagus, but that does not matter. The place has a grip which arises from more than mere mortal ashes.

A little way along the road to Le Blanc, turning to the left where you see a stone vessel of some sort at the corner of the street, you will find another of Poitiers' glories, the "Martyrs' Underground Chapel." I may say that in the Museum of the Antiquaries of the West they have a Roman wine-pressing vessel: they lament not having another, but this vessel built into the street corner appears to me to be another. Going well up

this street till you see a direction pointing left, you will find a bell to ring, and you can then visit this most interesting ruin. It is a seventh-century Christian cemetery oratory in a heathen burying-ground. There are reliefs and paintings of the most interesting possible kind. There is nothing like it, even near Rome. It is a kind of little cemetery chapel containing tombs. It is called a *memoria* by its founder, Mellebaud, himself buried there, who says, in his inscription, that "You come here sorrowing and go away happy." One need not emphasize its importance as an Early Christian monument, and one can picture the joy of le Père de la Croix when his sagacity uncovered this priceless treasure of antiquity. Outside are tombs. One is of special interest to English travellers; it is a hasty tomb of rough stones put together for the Bishop of Châlons, who fell at Poitiers. While one bishop was all for consideration and clemency, this one was for the harsh terms which determined the Black Prince to fight —and win. So many French dead were left on that field that he was lucky who got a tomb at all. Many were hastily buried in and near by the chapel of the Cordeliers.

Near is a remarkable thirteenth-century tomb with a kind of cave carved for the head of the deceased; another, more roughly made, is also to be found not far away. Another coffin yet has still its travelling-case about it. Inside the coffin was a skeleton and a large number of snail shells. This does not signify the cause of death; it has some strange symbolical meaning.

Farther up the main road, and sharp to the left at the water-tower, is the Pierre Levée, a fallen dolmen, celebrated by Rabelais.

I have left to the last the famous Baptistery, the oldest Christian building in France, or very near it, if one accepts the view that it was actually built as a place of Christian immersion—its date being about A.D. 320. It has been much restored, rebuilt, and was burned by the Normans in 865. Now it is a Gallo-Roman and Merovingian Museum. There are remains of early frescoes. Despite the weighty authority of le Père de la Croix, I cannot help believing that it was originally a pagan temple—and is earlier therefore than the early date to which he assigns it. The original or earliest ground plan, which we owe to le Père de la Croix himself, is peculiarly like that of the Sanxay temple, though not forming so perfect a Greek cross; and the octagonal *cella* of such a temple, with its underground chamber (as at Sanxay) would be easy to transform into an immersion font—and it would be a joy to the Early Christians to consecrate and use such a temple for the ceremonies of their religion. This must, however, remain a guess. One point of great interest is that the emptying drain-pipe is smaller than the filling one. This suggests that the emptying drain was at one time the only one. When the cavity was turned into a font a slightly larger pipe of entry was inserted, so that there must have been a regular flow of water; overflow would be checked by some primitive form of tap. Had both pipes been put in at the same time, they would probably have been equal. But those who wish to study the Baptistery fully must read le Père de la Croix's own monograph.

One wants a long time at Poitiers. There are delightful surroundings, some already noted. At Ligugé, only seven kilometres away, is the fine Benedictine abbey, with remains of the early buildings, which formed

HOTEL FUMÉE AND RUE DE LA CHAINE, POITIERS

the first French monastery, founded by St-Martin in 361. There is a great pilgrimage thither on the 4th July, another on the 11th November, both being festivals of St-Martin. At Angles-sur-l'Anglin is a ruined castle; in the cemetery is one of the curious twelfth-century crosses with a small altar. The presence of this altar, and the construction of other such crosses as I have observed, make me think that they were used for an outdoor Mass on certain occasions. At Angles is the house of Cardinal La Balue, whom we have found in cages all along the Loire. At Château-Larcher, about sixty kilometres off, is a "lantern of the dead." There is a fine twelfth-century castle at Château-du-Fou, on the Clain. Vieux-Poitiers is also about sixty kilometres away; it has ancient ruins and an interesting menhir. Sanxay can also be reached easily from Poitiers. Americans should visit Parzay-le-Sec on the way to St-Savin.

One can make various very pleasant expeditions to places both of interest and of beauty all round about the neigbourhood. For instance, it is one's duty—if one can do it without in any way trampling upon French susceptibilities—to go and look, at least, at the site of the famous Battle of Poitiers, which was really, of course, the Battle of Maupertuis, and which was perhaps the most supreme example of English cheek. One can track a certain amount of the lie of the ground, as it was in the old days of course, and I give some account of the battle for the sake of those who will visit the scene as I did. This comes from Professor Oman's expert work on mediaeval warfare.

Or one can take the line which ultimately leads to Le Blanc, and go to see one of the finest Romanesque churches in all France, at any rate the finest example

of the eleventh century. There is a beautiful tower and a quite unusually magnificent spire, probably of the fourteenth century. The interior is completely perfect. One goes down steps to enter the church, and the aisles are exactly the same size as the central nave: there are two charming little apses at the east of each transept. The church is also celebrated for its remarkable mural paintings, some of them as early as the eleventh century, and only comparatively recently (a couple of centuries ago) brought to light. There are two crypts, and in them also are extremely wonderful paintings, perhaps the most wonderful of all, which illustrates the legend of St-Savin and St-Cyprian. There is a little thirteenth-century statue of the Virgin, which is now in the north transept, but came originally from the porch. I seldom remember so completely impressive a building, and I spent some time sitting quietly in the church and absorbing it all in silence, till at last I heard the sound of strident voices, jest and laughter, and knew that I was in the presence of some of my own countrywomen.

On the way to St-Savin one passes the particularly striking site of Chauvigny, which is an old feudal town, partly down in the valley of the Vienne and partly on a very fine escarpment. There are the remains of its five castles, and the general effect, seen from below, is perhaps as fine as anything in all Poitou.

In my train back there was a sudden incursion of a French family, which was evidently going out to visit relations and had got itself up in all its best. There were neat and pretty children—a handsome mother, a model of carefulness, thoughtfulness, and considerateness. She was very much worried about her husband's collar, which, apparently being worn only on ceremonial

occasions, kept coming undone and took a great deal of putting straight. He endured all this care with great resignation, not to say with an air of happiness, but at last, to my horror, he produced an enormous clasp-knife, and I presumed that I was about to be the witness of some dreadful domestic tragedy, and that the poor man, like Ulysses in the Palace of Calypso, was bored to despair by over-much perfection. But this enormous weapon was only used to clean his nails, which had been omitted in the general family wash and brush-up.

I had the greatest possible difficulty in Poitiers in two directions. One was getting a lunch basket from the hotel to take out on my excursions, which completely upset the entire establishment in the preparing, but which in the end failed to arrive , and also in attempting to buy a pair of ordinary straps of reasonable strength. Of these I could not find one in all the city. In the bazaars there were innumerable feeble and useless rug-straps, and I was offered many ladies' belts in the market. I visited several kind old saddlers, handsome men, straight out of a Rembrandt or a Gerard Douw, and they told me, with soft voices, that if I would give my dimensions they would make me the straps in a day or two, but there was not a single respectable family strap in the whole of Poitiers. I may say that on my arrival at Richelieu I found a saddler's shop next my little inn. The shop was most picturesque, the saddler a fine old man, and his one desire in life was to make straps, so I achieved my aim at length.

The Battle of Maupertuis

The Battle of Maupertuis is not quite as clear as it might be, even in the pages of Professor Oman, because the authorities are conflicting.

The Black Prince had done some admirable plundering and meant to get his haul away to Bordeaux. To attack a small mounted force hampered with much baggage should be an easy thing, and John of France was wrong neither in hoping for a "brisk and jolly" battle nor in collecting an overwhelming force to make a sure job of it.

Edward was on the Loire, and learnt that the French were swooping down to cut them off from their southern base. Both forces made for Poitiers, where (as Professor Oman puts it) they "collided in the most casual way." In fact, Edward, marching from Châtellerault, literally bumped into the rearward of the French troops, harried them, and now being aware of the enemy, branched off, so as to avoid Poitiers, and halted at Maupertuis. This meant a battle, unless the plunder was to be jettisoned. Moved apparently both by canniness and the knightly notion that you must not disappoint your enemy, the Prince stood his ground, though he made arrangements to get the baggage train off as soon as it was fit to travel.

The village has gone; there is only the farm (La Cardinière) left. The country at this particular spot was rather like that of the *bocage*—fairly level, but covered with thicket. A river, well below the plateau, runs on the south. A ford lay to the English left.

The Prince used the northern thickets of the wood of Nouaillé (this is the name of the railway station whence you visit the ground) as a kind of zariba, and placed wagons in any gaps. The fight was really for the ford.

So desperate did the English position seem that the Cardinal of Périgord, Talleyrand, begged to be allowed to save the slaughter of innocent men; but the French

terms, which the kind Cardinal could not modify, were too stiff, and both hosts awaited the fight, though the Prince thought that perhaps he might draw off in time after all.

Here authorities vary. At any rate, Salisbury, with the rearguard, became involved, and the Prince supported him. It was not country for horsemen, and the French men-at-arms fought on foot. The skill of the English lay in making the French do, so to speak, all the work, while they kept to their hedges and thickets, men-at-arms and archers mixed.

The French opened with a charge which was itself rather disorderly, and left too big a gap between their horse and their dismounted troops. A clever side-attack by the Earl of Oxford harassed the French advance: the English—being desperate men—neglected no opportunity of scoring a point. But the Dauphin's "battle" came up; and a very violent and prolonged struggle took place, at the close of which the French fell back from the deadly Waterloo-like stolidity of the defence.

Fortune favoured the brave. The next French "battle" not only suffered from a bad attack of nerves at the back ebb of the Dauphin's troops, but probably became disorganized by their retreat. They did not come on to the attack. None the less, the French King was no poltroon. He threw his whole weight against the English line, the men of which were busy with the wounded, foraging for swords and arrows, and generally bearing an appearance of troops at their last gasp. Edward saw that only bold measures could win now. He threw in his few fresh men, sent round a handful for a flank attack, and cast the die. It was the flank attack which decided the wavering fight,

The French imagined a greater host was on them, broke, and fled.

Of the terrible slaughter of knights in this battle one can still get echoes at Poitiers, and the Bishop's tomb at the "Hypogée" shows visible proof of a bad breakdown of the city's undertakers.

The effects of the battle were striking enough; but it did not give us France.

Thouars

To miss Thouars, as probably many Loire tourists do, is a pity. True, it is not on the Loire but on the Thouet; but it is in close harmony in general design and style with the Loire castle towns. Its castle is one of those which makes use of the cliff on which it stands as part of its defence; and the great stretch of cliff and wall rising steeply to where the buildings actually begin is very imposing indeed. One wonders how ever, in the Vendée wars, Thouars was taken by assault—even by the bravest of men.

Most charming of the Thouars relics is the mediaeval bridge. This is now, of course, shorn of its ancient tower and its two-turreted gate, from which fell a drawbridge. But it is delightful as it is, with its fine old gate of approach, and the view of it from the new bridge is most effective.

Next to the castle—itself rebuilt in 1635 and spoiled by its too monotonous front—is a beautiful chapel of the Early Renaissance.

There are two magnificent churches (St-Médard and St-Laon), fine twisting streets of old houses, a great gate (the "Provost's Gate"), and a good deal else of interest.

Thouars was the centre of the Berton conspiracy,

the conspirators collecting here to march to Saumur, where expected support failed them. The general himself was, as we have seen, executed at Poitiers. One citizen of Thouars who had secretly attached himself to the band—a pastry-cook of the Place St-Médard—was saved by the cunning of his wife, who left him his shako and other portions of his uniform, but hid all his trousers at the house of a neighbour.

The ancient Thouars, with all its ramparts and towers standing, must have been most imposing. The enclosure filled the heights round which the Thouet makes a perfect horseshoe bend. One of the towers, called the Fringall Tower, and, by some corruption, the Prince of Wales's Tower, stands boldly up against the sky; it was evidently a safe retreat for archers and men-at-arms, whence they could sally out on the road beneath.

In the sacristy of St-Laon, formerly a chapel, is buried Louis XI's first wife, Margaret of Scotland. Louis was often at Thouars, staying here on the way to see his friend de Commines at Argenton, and once fell ill in the Hôtel des Trois Rois. The present Girls' School encloses a fine fifteenth-century mansion, that of Louis Tyndo, with its beautiful staircase-tower. A fine window is left of the Convent of the Cordeliers.

Altogether, Thouars deserves more than a passing visit.

CHAPTER XXI

RICHELIEU AND CHINON

Richelieu and Chinon

FROM Poitiers I made my way to Richelieu. One passes on the way, or can easily divert to, Vieux Poitiers, which is a very primitive settlement of the Pictons, and has a relic of its prehistoric days in a large menhir with an inscription in the Gallic language.

Châtellerault is an ancient city, now chiefly renowned for its manufacture of arms and cutlery of all kinds. The moment you appear there people rush towards you with various kinds of sharp weapons, but it is your money and not your life that they are after.

The route to Richelieu, on which runs a motor-bus, is interesting because the bus does not follow the main road, but diverts in many little byways. As a result one finds singularly picturesque little places with particularly beautiful churches.

Seven kilometres away from Richelieu is the little village of Faye. It has a very charming old church of the twelfth century, with a remarkable crypt, one of the finest in this part of the country (and we are now, of course, no longer in Poitou but in Touraine). It still has its old altar and some fine capitals. There is a second crypt, where the canons used to be buried. The little village, which is suitably called Faye-la-Vineuse, is on the top of a small hill, and was in the

old days a small fortified place; the church itself could be used as a defence. Faye was, of course, bought up by the Richelieus, as so much else was in the neighbourhood.

The town of Richelieu, which one enters after passing the walls of the castle, of which castle very little remains (a modern house has taken its place), across what no doubt was the old drawbridge, is peculiarly charming as being all of one period. When the Cardinal, who was, of course, the Lord of Richelieu, became a great man, he grew rather ashamed of the humble little place which bore his name, and he built, therefore, a town on very regular plans, which were prepared by Le Mercier, at the same time building a huge castle in place of his old ancestral manor-house. It is thought that he hardly ever dwelt in the castle and cannot have seen very much of the town.

Some people speak ill of this strange little town, with its four gates, its straight roads, its walls and its bridges, but for my own part it struck me as one of the most charming little places that I had ever seen. It lies in the midst of very pleasant country, chiefly covered, where it can be used, by the vine, though round about the neighbourhood of Faye they appear to me to waste a great deal of good land on artichokes.

Staying at Richelieu was like taking rooms for a time at Versailles. One could hardly say whether one was living in an old town or in an old palace. It was a palace-town or town-palace. Even the quite small houses are of the palace type, with the usual pinched roofs that one sees so commonly at Versailles, but the prim regularity of the town has been somewhat broken into, and certainly improved by the picturesque backyards and outhouses which the dwellers on the

walls have built out into the moats, and the moats themselves are filled with charming gardens. One curious habit of the dwellers round the moat is that they have managed for themselves little doors into the outer wall of the moat, from which they pop up into the road by little trap-doors, so that as one walks round the town one is constantly seeing the inhabitants shooting up from underground, like a colony of trap-door spiders. Everything is of the period, and there is a most beautiful market-place in admirable woodwork just opposite the church, which is in the Baroque style and not specially interesting. The Great Street, as it is called, has fine houses on either side, all exactly alike, but somehow the total effect is very admirable. I went into one courtyard which appeared open, and I found that they had built in it a little sort of toy chapel, and that the great house surrounding it was now an orphanage, in fact the whole place has rather the appearance of a sort of toy. Penetrating into other courtyards I found that they had generally been transformed into all sorts of odd places with picturesque beams, sheds, and tiles.

In the hotel where I stayed I found several beautiful things of the Louis XVI period. There was a fine panelled room, splendid fire-dogs, good clocks, and so on. The landlord was very kind in showing me over, and only regretted that he had not discovered before that I took so much interest in antiques. We found that we had, in the French phrase, " made the war " together in Italy, and I shall hope to visit both Richelieu and its little hotel again as soon as possible. It was, in fact, with the greatest regret that I left Richelieu, even though it was for Chinon.

One goes in a terrible little train, which swayed so

much that one had to hold on, and which in fact did everything but stand on its head, but somehow brought us into Chinon alive. I acquired a cheap reputation for wit among the old market-women by the somewhat vulgar joke of asking for a basin and hunting under the seat for life-belts.

We first passed Champigny, the castle of which I need hardly say was bought by the inevitable Richelieu and pulled down, so that nothing might throw his new castle at Richelieu itself into the shade. Something has been rebuilt in later days and the old stables are still standing, but there is also the beautiful St-Chapelle, which is in rather a curious mixed style of somewhere about 1530. Inside there are interesting inscriptions and fine cupboards, and so on; especially admirable are the stained-glass windows of the sixteenth century. There is another castle close by, the castle of La Pataudière, which also has a particularly fine chapel.

Chinon, as everyone knows, is a perfect joy, and the view which one gets entering from Richelieu, if one dare face the little train, is finer really than that which one gets from any other route.

Chinon

Chinon is a sheer joy from beginning to end. The Vienne is, all in all, a more picturesque river than the Loire itself. At Chinon it is most attractive, and even the walk from the railway station, usually so dull in most French towns, takes you straight to the river, to bush- and tree-clad banks, to little boats, and patient fishermen, and an air of peace and beauty all about you.

Before you mount to the castle, you must ramble through Chinon's very picturesque old streets, and see where Rabelais is said to have lived awhile—he was

probably born at La Devinière, but it matters not so much whether Chinon can claim his birth or not; he is of the country, and he describes, in his fantastic way, both places and people which you can find to-day in his country-side. It was in the Abbey of Seuilly, only a few kilometres from Chinon, where he began his studies, and we must think of Rabelais, of course, not only as a humorist and satirist, but as a man of very great learning indeed. He is a great educationalist, for example, and was a great scientist as well.

It is in the Rue Voltaire and in the Rue J.-J. Rousseau that you will find the most charming old houses. Turrets seem to grow everywhere in old Chinon. As for the old houses in wood, not only are they beautiful in themselves, but somehow the inhabitants seem to add the right touch: there is a box of flowers; an old woman, like Rembrandt's mother, looking out of a window; a little bright-clad, black-haired girl playing with some absurd kitten.

Then there are fine churches, St-Maurice (in the "Plantagenet" style; there is an inscription to tell us that Henry II built it), with its fine Romanesque tower (a later spire) and its bosses in the roof, full of history, if you can crane your neck to look up at them. St-Maxime is no longer used as a church; its front is early eleventh century; there are curious frescoes (as also at St-Maurice), and the left tower of the front is one of those twelfth-century towers we have got so accustomed to in Poitou and Touraine—and which, let us hope, we have come to love.

But we are all anxious to get to the castle—or rather to the three castles, for Chinon, as did so many other hill places, crowned its hill with more than one. We pass first by the Castle of St-Georges, and then through

the middle castle. The former was added as a sort of outpost by Henry II, and there is not now much of it left. The middle castle is on the site of the old Roman camp. You enter it through the "Clock Pavilion," where you ring the bell, after looking both to right and left, over town and river, as you cross the viaduct. A very admirable pavilion or tower it is, built in the latter part of the fourteenth century. It is of this tower, seen end on, and looking tall and slim, that one gets such beautiful views, especially in the Rue de Grand-Carroi, whence it appears rising above a fine old turreted house.

The viaduct over which you go rests on ancient supports, and here was, of course, the old drawbridge, let down from buildings which are no longer there. Inside the tower is a fourteenth-century bell, "Marie Javelle," which rings on great occasions.

Once through the door, you are in the middle castle, and must cross another bridge before reaching the third castle, de Coudray. Those who desire to get a good idea of a mediaeval castle, its walls, wall-towers, moats, inner towers, and other buildings, should go over this middle castle with plan in hand. They should observe the different treatment of the Vienne side, where the natural features of the hill are used and augmented, with the other side overlooking the road. On this road side they should notice especially the fine "Dogs' Tower," used, in the flourishing days of the castle, as a kennel for the royal packs. If they become quick to note differences of masonry, of joins, of mortar, they will be able to reconstruct the history of the three castles, which, however, for the benefit of the less expert, I give here in brief.

We begin with the fifth-century Roman camp, whose

moats have gone, but the natural ravine on the east is still, of course, there—it is this which you crossed when making for the Clock Tower. We do not know what this primitive Roman "castle" was like, but big blocks without mortar were found by excavation, and they suggest a fairly solid structure. We must in mind fill up the moat which parts the two western castles, and we must imagine the hill of St. George's fort still bare.

Then come the Counts of Blois, in the tenth century, and some of their original work you can see in the walls of north and west of what is now the third castle, of Coudray. So far as we can judge, in this age the site of the two inner castles (no moat yet between them) was walled in all round; but what exact buildings were there—except, no doubt, a stalwart entrance gateway, towers, probably, on the walls, and the ancient Chapel of Ste-Mélaine, now vanished—we cannot say.

Next came along the Counts of Anjou and the English. This is a great building period. Clearly the English kings had to fortify strongly—they had either to "get on" or "get out," so to speak; so Henry II builds the outpost fort of St. George, the patron saint of England. He also, no doubt, strengthened the main castle, and probably the fine Mill-Tower is of his building—it did duty as the keep.[1] The English meant to stay at Chinon, so rooms are built also where they could live with reasonable comfort and security. Richard Cœur de Lion seems to have carried on the work, since experts find resemblances between Chinon and Château-Gaillard, which he certainly built in Normandy.

[1] Every schoolboy knows, or should know, the dramatic story of Henry's death in this his favourite dwelling, broken-hearted, it is said, by the wickedness of John, his son; one cannot wonder.

Then the castle comes back to the French, and Charles VII develops the habitable portions of it, and builds also halls and a chapel. The "great hall" therefore, where St-Joan first met him, was of his own construction. By this time most of the castle was standing; a last tower (d'Argenton) is added later, perhaps by Philippe de Commines.

Now we can go into the remains of the Great Hall, and try to picture the scene so often retold of the entrance of the Maid of Orleans before an astonished and perhaps rather incredulous court, crowded together (for the Great Hall was not really very great) round the Dauphin, to see what they might see. This—taken from Anatole France's description—is what they saw, and what we must try to see for ourselves as we stand within the bare ruins.

The Great Hall was full of people, in fact it would seem rather more like a market-place than a hall of audience. We are told it was evening. Light was given by fifty torches. The courtiers were there—many of them would be wearing furs,[1] and there were three hundred men-at-arms, so that there must have been a very great crowd indeed in this comparatively small room. There were present the two envoys from Orleans, no doubt also the Archbishop of Rheims.

We are told that Charles took good care not to be conspicuous in this motley throng. Whether he actually disguised himself, as the story goes, we cannot be sure; at any rate, he was hidden among the throng.

Joan was introduced by the Count of Vendôme. She had the appearance of a strong country farm-girl, save that she was already dressed in something like

[1] According to rank. There were strict laws about furs. Cinderella, who seems to have worn slippers of *vair*, was a high-born lady.

man's clothing. Her black hair was cut like a boy's, but she wore on her head a little woollen cap. She went straight up to the King, took off her cap, and said: "May God give you good life, gentle Dauphin."

People regarded it as a matter of great astonishment that she had recognized the King, who, if not disguised, was certainly not the best dressed of the company; but in any case, had he been dressed to the very utmost, he never would have looked like a king, and one must regard it as some sort of miracle that Joan should recognize in him a king at all. He is said to have been rather bandy-legged; at any rate, his figure, if not deformed, was a poor one. It is just possible that Joan might have seen him in some picture, but pictures were rare in those days, though the King occasionally appeared, of course, in miniatures. Besides, great painters are given to idealizing their subjects, and that would have made it all the harder to recognize the real King as he was.

Those who, like Anatole France, are inclined to rationalize the whole story, tell us that probably people had contrived to give her certain indications as to what the King looked like.

She made to him a little rustic curtsy. The King asked her name and what she wanted. She replied (and we must remember that nearly all her words and statements have been carefully preserved): "Gentle Dauphin, I am called Jeanne the Maid, and the King of Heaven sends to you His commandment by me that you are to be crowned at Rheims, and that you are to be lieutenant of the King of Heaven, as the King of France rightly is."

She asked at once that they should set her to work, and promised to raise the siege of Orleans. The King

took her apart—so far as could be done in that crowd—and questioned her. He was naturally a kind-hearted man and affable towards the humble, but he was not without a certain suspicious element in his character. In this private talk she made him this strange revelation, which had of course a deeper meaning than appears on the surface: "I tell you on the part of Our Lord that thou art the true heir of France and son of the French King."

Charles gave her leave to go, and repeated what she had told him[1] to some members of his Council. It was decided that she, in any case, must be kept close by the court, and that it would be well to examine her both in her character and also in her beliefs.

She had been, as we know, staying in Chinon town, but now she was moved up to the castle and was given a lodging in a tower of the castle called Coudray, which she had been for three days past eagerly eyeing from below. It may have been the traditional tower called the Tower of Coudray, but that name itself is a later name.

She was given in trust to the King's Steward, Bellier, and he in turn gave her one of his own pages to attend upon her, a boy of fifteen years. Bellier's wife, a good and pious lady, also kept careful watch over Joan. The page tells us—or rather declared in the trial—that he had often seen Joan on her knees. "She prayed often and she wept often." Whenever any great people came to speak with her they found her always dressed in man's attire.

The King himself would go now and then to see her, and at one of these interviews the Duke of Alençon entered the room. He had been for five years a prisoner

[1] Except this last secret.

of the English and had just heard the story that a country girl had been sent from God to the King to drive the English from France. This news interested him deeply, for he had married the daughter of the Duke of Orleans. He came therefore, post haste, to Chinon, to see what there was to see.

On seeing him approach Joan demanded who this lord was, and as he approached she saluted him and said: "You are welcome. The more there are here of the true blood of France the better it will be." The Dauphin is said to have smiled cynically.

Next day Joan attended the King's Mass, and afterwards she had an interview with him, in which she made several special requests. She asked him especially to make a complete gift of his kingdom to the King of Heaven, and then she said: "The King of Heaven in turn will do for you what he has done for your predecessors, and will seat you in the seat that belonged to your fathers." She walked with the King the same day, and also showed great skill in horsemanship.

The Duke, a few days afterwards, took her to the Abbey of St-Florent-les-Saumur, celebrated for its extremely magnificent church, and introduced her to his mother and his wife. They were extremely delighted to see her, but they had very little confidence in the result of the war. The Duchess of Alençon, speaking to her kindly, said: "I am afraid for my husband: he has only just got out of prison, and we have had to pay so much for his ransom that I wish he would stay at home a time." Joan replied: "You may have no fear, I will give you him back as strong and well as he is now, or even better."

It was decided that Joan should be taken to Poitiers and there examined by the learned doctors of the

University. She left Chinon without escort, thinking that she was going to Orleans, and when it was revealed that she was going to Poitiers to be examined, she is said to have exclaimed: "Well, I shall have trouble there, but God will help me; so onward, in the name of God!"

It is by tradition only that we can identify the tower assigned to the Maid; we have no precise statement. What was later called the Coudray Tower served as the keep in the fifteenth century. It is most likely that the Maid would be safeguarded in the keep. Wall-scratchings and *graffiti* on the ground floor may be the work of the guards, or perhaps of previous tenants of the tower, the Templars.[1] It is, at any rate, in this tower that we can best picture her, waiting anxiously for the call to action, and looking over the Vienne to the open country beyond.

On one of my later visits to Chinon I went up to the castle, as one would, resolved to meditate on its story, on Jeanne d'Arc, on all the beauty and pathos and glory of the spot. I feared this could not be; there were sure to be hustling Americans, getting "right there," there would be shrill-voiced countrywomen of my own, Yorkshire schoolmarms, perhaps, pleasant enough and no doubt in amiable correspondence with their own environments, but not just what I wanted then and there. There was no one. Only myself, let loose to wander till I got tired and called upon little Marie to let me out.

I did meditate. I do not put down my meditations because nobody has a right to meditate on paper about St. Joan since Charles Péguy died in battle for France—Péguy, who has got nearer the real St. Joan, probably,

[1] See above on Loches, Chapter VI.

than anyone else. But I got near her too, that glorious silent afternoon. I sat where she must have sat, I walked where she must have walked, I looked on what she must have looked on (though the angle must have been different),[1] the sun setting over the Vienne. The colours came and went, the waters shifted from gold to carmine, clouds blazed up and grew dark. As I watched I became aware I was not alone (no, gentle reader, I am not going to write sentimental nonsense about the spirit of St. Joan standing by my side; it wasn't). A gardener, a rough-looking man, had come up, was leaning also on the parapet, was gazing at the sun. He did not move or speak—he must have seen that sight many times; but when the colours were nearly gone, and I turned to go too, I left him still entranced there. (I should explain that this was in his own time; his day's work was done.)

[1] She was there in March, arriving, as we know, on the middle Sunday in Lent, called *Laetare*, "Rejoice."

CHAPTER XXII

BACK TO THE LOIRE: AMBOISE

THE most wonderful view of Amboise is that which one gets first, the moment one arrives at the river from the railway station. It is perhaps the round tower which is in the centre of the great castle group which gives especially an air of beauty and dignity to the whole. Of all the castles of the Loire it is perhaps in the most splendid strategical position. It is built just in the most important part of the valley, that from which one reaches Paris. It may be called, therefore, in a sense, one of the gates of Paris itself. It lies also midway between Blois and Tours, and so seems to control one on either side. That is why a castle was at Amboise from very early times indeed. The Gauls had there a town. The plateau of the castle is still called the Camp of Cæsar, though one cannot by any means prove that it goes back to Cæsar's own day.

We hear of the first Count of Amboise in 376. Amboise, naturally enough, will tell us much of the history of the great family of Foulques. The first castle is said to have been built, or rather rebuilt, by Ingelger, and it was his son, Foulques the Red, who is said to have completed its reconstruction. It fell into the hands of the lords of Buzançais, and remained in their ownership for three years. In or about 1159 Thomas à Becket of Canterbury, who was then at the Abbey of Ste-Colombe

near Sens, was fortunate enough to win the good offices of the King of France, Louis VII. An interview between the two kings was held at Amboise. Henry promised to give the Archbishop all his dignities and all his offices again. It was in the following year, as we know, that the Archbishop was murdered.

It was in 1434 that Amboise became a royal residence, and from that time onwards the history of Amboise is practically the history of the monarchy. The kings were evidently very fond of this very precious possession. Charles VII, who was the first of the kings to own it, had it fortified with the greatest possible care. He built in the castle church the chapel of St-Michael , and it was from Amboise that he went off to combat the insurrections of the Dauphin. Louis XI hurries almost immediately after his coronation to Amboise and is received with the greatest joy by the whole town. But Amboise was not going to be altogether a place of fêtes under the reign of Louis. It was one of the castles in which the Cardinal La Balue and the Bishop of Verdun were placed in one of those cages that are said to have been invented by the Bishop of Verdun himself. The Cardinal was not long at Amboise. He was transferred almost immediately to Onzain, opposite to Chaumont. Louis possibly did not quite like to go on living in a castle which he had now turned into a sort of royal prison. At any rate, it was not long before he took up his residence in the gloomy Plessis-les-Tours, but, none the less, he gave Amboise to his wife and son, and caused, in fact, his son to be treated more like a prisoner than as a prince. We have the actual instructions which he gave to the governor of the castle, and it reminds us rather of the strange drama of Calderon, " La Vida es Sueno."

Charles VIII, brought up therefore almost as a captive

in and about the castle of Amboise, might have been expected the moment his father had died to have left Amboise for ever. On the contrary, he had acquired a great love for the place, and did a great deal to beautify it. Anne de Bretagne also seems to have felt a great affection for Amboise, and we may say that it was Charles who was the actual builder of the present castle. It was at Amboise that the Duke of Orleans tried to bring off his famous kidnapping, so as to remove him from the protection of Anne of Beaujeu.

On going off to Italy, Charles left Amboise to his son Charles-Roland, who died there in 1495. His tomb and that of a brother are to be seen in the Cathedral of Tours, brought there from the choir of old St-Martin's. It was possibly in sorrow for these losses that Charles busied himself in the work of developing the castle.

Next comes the story of Charles's death. We found at Amboise a kind guide who gave English renderings of his French, and told us with much gravity that "on this door Charles VIII hurt his head and he died." One did not at first perceive that he was translating the French "se heurta," "banged violently into" the door. The fact, however, is much in dispute. It seems more likely, at any rate, that if Charles "hurt himself" on any door it was not this one, as we are told that he went and watched people playing fives (*jeu de paume*) in the moat for some time, and then fell down, in much pain—too much, indeed, to allow of his being moved—so that he was laid down on some straw, and about eight in the evening expired in agony. He must surely have been on the ground level, in his garden, and if indeed he "hurt" his head, it must have been on a garden doorway. He could hardly have watched the players from the gallery which formerly led from the little low door

which is now pointed out to visitors. Of course, after a violent blow, it is possible to "carry on" for some time without consciousness of the damage. Football players, after a knock, have gone on for some time playing, perhaps brilliantly, till the whistle blew, though they have often professed no recollection of the latter part of the game. Charles may, therefore, have seemed quite normal till the brain-clot, or whatever it was, had formed. But the story points rather to an apoplexy.

The Duke of Orleans came at once to Amboise on hearing of his brother's death, and we have the documents which tell us in full of the elaborate arrangements made for the late King's funeral.

In 1499 Louis married his brother's widow, Anne de Bretagne, and continued his residence at the castle. It was just about the same time that Louise of Savoie, as we have already seen, came with her two children, the future Francis I and the Princess Marguerite, to live at Amboise. Louise's journal tells us of the peril that was run by Francis when a horse given him by the Marshal of Gié ran away with him.

I had determined, when starting this book, to cut off nobody's head during its progress, but with Francis II we come to that famous story which can by no means be left out in the story of Amboise. In 1560 there was an alliance between the Huguenots and such of the Catholics as did not like the growing power of the Guises. The Prince of Condé was a power in the background, but the actual working chief was La Renaudie. Though the pretext of the conspiracy was religious, this uniting of two apparently hostile forces makes it quite clear that it was a combined political attack upon the Guises. This is not the first time in history that what has seemed to be a religious war or a religious revolt

appears on closer study to be a political revolt under the banner of religion. The conspirators, as we know, were anxious to occupy one of the gates of the château while the King was at dinner. Against the King himself they had no quarrel. In some way the Duke of Guise heard of the conspiracy, and La Renaudie himself was killed in a skirmish in the woods, but a very large number were also made prisoners, and a terrible massacre, of which the guides of the castle will omit no gruesome detail, took place. We are unable to say whether it was Catherine or whether it was the Guises themselves who stage-managed the awful details of this execution. At any rate, Amboise has even to this day a horror of blood about it, and it is perhaps strange that this wholesale and cruel slaughter marks the last important event in the history of Amboise, so far as it affects the history of France. Those who like to see the process of historical whitewashing very wonderfully done will read, no doubt, Balzac's famous study on Catherine of Médicis, and they will become convinced that she at least had no other course open to her. The book is a marvel of special pleading, but the fact is that the currents of history are so confused about this time that it is intensely difficult to fix praise or blame anywhere with certainty. The kings of France continued to come to Amboise, but its history, except as a State prison, was at an end.

We can make a very complete study of Amboise, because we have views of the castle at all sorts of different periods of its construction. It was hardly damaged by the Revolution. It was since then that vandalism has done its worst. The most charming architectural jewel, of course, of the whole castle is the chapel of St-Hubert. This is perhaps the most beautiful gem of French Renaissance work, for French it certainly is. Its façade has a

great ogival opening, with a great rose at the top. We know as soon as we see that that we are in the presence of Flamboyant Gothic. Over the doors themselves there is the famous bas-relief of the Conversion of St-Hubert. The tomb of Leonardo da Vinci, who was, as we know, buried in the church of St-Florentin, is shown in this extremely delicate chapel, which is a summary, as the life of Leonardo itself was, of all that was most beautiful in the Renaissance.

Whether anything of Leonardo really rests in the chapel of St-Hubert we do not know; but it is good that at least the tomb of the greatest mind of the Renaissance lies in this quite perfect little model and jewel of Renaissance work. He must have loved it dearly.

CHAPTER XXIII

SAUMUR AND FONTEVRAULT

THE writer of an interesting book on the Loire and other Touraine rivers[1] naïvely confesses to having given only half a day to Saumur. He suggests that one might profitably give two. My own advice is, make it a full week, if we may include in Saumur the district of which it forms so excellent a centre. Indeed, I was so charmed with Saumur that I began to think of settling there for my old age. This is no mere weakness for its "mossy" wines, though I am free to confess (having already "given away" my taste for "Faye") that a good Saumur appears to me to be much better than the so-called champagne purchasable at anything like the same cost. Rather it is the pleasant little town, just the right size, the interesting and historic country round about it, and a general feeling that one is in the midst of an industrious, happy, and agreeable people that draws me to Saumur. Perhaps also it is the horses, which always seem to bring into a place a kindly human feeling. They are very good horses, and they mean a perpetual movement in their part of the town which forbids one becoming dull.

As the horses of Saumur are good horses, so its castle is a good castle and its Hôtel de Ville a good Hôtel de Ville. Good, too, are its churches, good are its twisting, climbing streets, and the old houses which linger there.

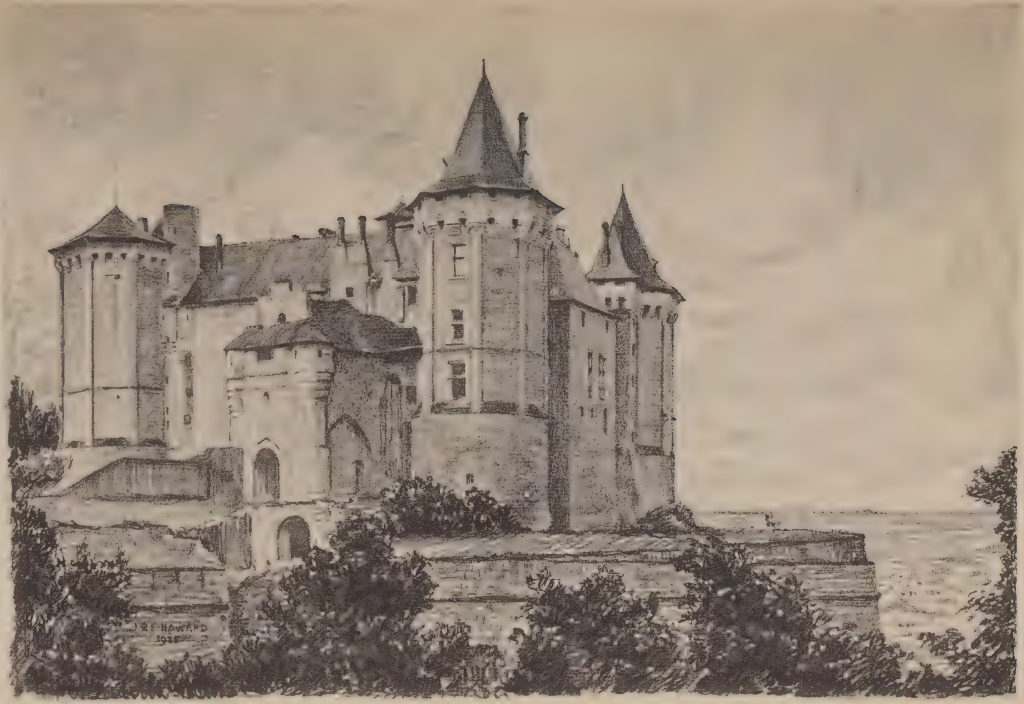
[1] Frederic Lees, *A Summer in Touraine.*

There is also an excellent street running parallel with the river up to Notre Dame des Ardilliers, itself a church more dignified than pleasing. Built in 1553, it was increased later, one chapel being built by (need we say ?) Richelieu. The dome was completed by Madame de Montespan, who often came this way (her lodging can still be seen near the church) to visit her sister, who was Abbess of Fontevrault. Round the dome is a Latin inscription of 1695—"Homage of Louis XIV to the Mother of God." The oratory near by is an old men's almshouse. In the cliff are grottos, in some of which poor lunatics used at one time to be stowed.

The castle has a frowning, but still a majestic, appearance as one approaches the town over the long bridge across the island. On this island is a very pleasing street, the Rue de la Visitation, and in it the beautiful old mansion built by King René and known as the Queen of Sicily's house. It is a remarkable example of pre-Renaissance architecture, and does much credit to the national style of Touraine.

On approaching Saumur from this side one will naturally turn to the left along the quay and see the old Hôtel de Ville, which has the new one alongside. It is a strong building, as its position on the river bank demanded, more like a keep than a civic building. Near by is the chapel of St-Jean, in the "Angevin" style of the early thirteenth century. Farther along, towards the castle, is the historic church of St-Pierre. Its south transept has a fine Romanesque door; it is mostly twelfth-century, with a Renaissance aisle and a seventeenth-century front. Like the church of Nantilly, St-Pierre has some fine tapestries, usually kept in the sacristy.

The castle is due to the great castle-builder, Foulques Nerra, though it was his son Geoffrey who did most of



THE CHATEAU, SAUMUR

the building. It was burnt, along with the church of St-Pierre, by Guy de Poitiers; but Saumur always came up sparkling, and all was rebuilt again. We are glad to know that our Henry II did some useful work in counteracting floods.

The castle has three sides; it once had four, but it has gained much by the loss of that which fronted the river. The front which faces you as you enter has not so much of the fearsome "grimness" with which this castle is often credited, being delightfully broken by a staircase at either end; that on the left hand is peculiarly beautiful. Inside the castle are two capital museums, one of which possesses a complete Roman Tuba—a rare and precious treasure—but one does want to be allowed to blow it. The upper museum is that of "The Horse," where most things horsey, including their skeletons, are collected. One misses Greek horses, and when I am rich enough I shall send some casts of the Parthenon frieze. There are good examples of china and pottery generally; some by Palissy and the school of Palissy. There are some very fine Gobelin tapestries, and, however weary you grow of hearing the words, the Gobelin work is always very well worth looking at and studying, especially if you lose no opportunity of studying other, especially earlier, tapestries, so that you can compare the different kinds. If such is your mind, go straight to the splendid twelfth-century church of Nantilly, towards the Thouet, where you will see early tapestries coming (in part at least) from the Abbey of Fontevrault, so I was assured at Fontevrault. It is a very remarkable collection, and you can profitably spend a day over them.

Louis XI (for whom I must confess a sneaking regard far beyond what I feel for Charles VII, or François I, or

even Louis XII, Father of his People, there is evidently something wrong with me) often visited this church, and had his oratory at the west end, the evil old fox.

At Nantilly, in the famous church, with the famous tapestries, and this little oratory of Louis (what, I wonder, did he pray for there ?), there is the inscription of King René of Provence to his nurse Théphaine, a very pleasant, homely, and kindly touch of the good king :

Ci gist la nourrice Théphaine
La marraine qui ot grant paine
A nourrir de let en enfance
Marie danjou royne de France
Et apres son frere rene
Duc danjou et de puis nomme
Comme encor est roi de Sicile
Qui a vouler en cette ville
Pour grant amour de nourriture
Faire faire la sepulture
De la nourrice dessuldite
Qui a Dieu rendit lame quicte
Pour avoir grace et tout deduit
Mil cccc cinquante et huit
Ou moys de Mars xiii jour
Je vous pry tous par bone amour
Affin quelle ait ung pou de vostre
Donnez lui ugne patenostre.

The last three lines seem to mean : I pray you all in good loving-kindness, in order that she (Théphaine) may have a little of your love, give her a Pater-noster (say for her an " Our Father ").

The church of St-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet has been much restored, but, like all other churches, it began at least in the twelfth century. Very interesting, not far away, is the Lanterne des Morts in the backyard of No. 72 Rue St-Nicolas (people do not mind you poking in,

especially if you are very polite and talk bad French); it is a very curious example—its base is square, its cupola octagonal—and it is not high and slender, as are most of these "lanterns," but rather stumpy.

Of course you will visit the cavalry school—but that I shall not try to describe. If you come to Saumur (though you had better get rooms at a distance) at the time of the Carrousel, you will see a unique and very wonderful exhibition of riding.

The surroundings of Saumur are of great interest. There are good castles; there is the largest, or one of the largest, of the French dolmens at Bagneux; it is a regular mansion, and would fetch a price in these houseless days, if a trifle draughty. I do not pretend skill in dolmens, but this one, with its immense stone blocks, convinces me—what I believe others have been convinced of before—that these buildings could only have been made in time of frozen snow; the chamber being blocked out in the snow, and then built round with slabs drawn over the snow, and then up snow slides till they could be dropped in position, a trench being cut round the block. This might mean a large number of winters, the process being repeated whenever the snow was in proper condition. The roofing, which looks to us the hardest part, would of course on this theory be the easiest. Not far from this big dolmen is a lesser one, on which the hairy primitives perhaps tried their 'prentice hands.

At Souzay is the castle where King René's daughter Marguerite, the unhappy queen of our Henry II, died in 1482. Not far off are troglodytes' caves. At Montsoreau, right on the Loire, is a very fine castle, now being restored, and high time too. Under the French law of inheritance it seems to have come to belong to a large

number of different owners, each of whom appears to have delayed his repairs till someone else began. It is a good type of the feudal fortress. On either side is a big tower. Inside the court is a beautiful little tower decorated with reliefs. There are two ruined churches in the village, and that which survives is (readers, please forgive me, the fault is not mine) of the twelfth century. There are also good fifteenth- and sixteenth-century houses.

Farther up the Loire, where the Vienne joins it, is the very remarkable church of Candes, to visit which alone is worth making a stay at Saumur. It is strongly fortified, and is built over the little cell where St. Martin died in 397. Everything is good at Candes: proportions, graceful pillaring, decoration; and its porch is magnificent even beyond the magnificence to which Poitou and Touraine accustom us. Through the doorway, flanked by statues, with another row above, and a very pleasing gable between the battlements, you see the slender pillar which supports the porch vaulting. Towers enclose the whole front. There is a castle also at Candes, of later date. St-Martin, as we all know, was not allowed to remain at Candes; there are strange legends of the carrying off of the saint to be buried under his basilica at Tours.

At St-Florent little remains of the great abbey. There is the old gate and the crypt; and the church of St-Barthélemy is architecturally interesting, in "Angevin Gothic." At St-Hilaire, next to St-Florent, is an ancient church, partly cut in the rock. It also has a dolmen.

But it is to Cunault that you must go for an architectural feast, for in its splendid church you find some of the best of Poitevin Romanesque and also of the

Angevin style of the thirteenth century. The tower is perhaps of the eleventh. At Gennes are Roman remains, of amphitheatre and aqueduct ; and there is a very fine church, St-Eusèbe, and tower.

But we have not done with Saumur, which is also the best centre for visiting Fontevrault, where all English people will naturally go, if only to see the tomb of that brave but otherwise unsatisfactory King, Richard Cœur de Lion. A visit to the Loire makes one realize that there was little to choose between French royalty and English, in the early days ; both of us had one or two good kings, and rather more good, or pathetic, queens ; ours were on the whole slightly better, but that does not say much. We have both, in our different ways, " changed all that."

With Richard I were buried there also Henry II, Eleanor of Guienne, and John's Queen, Isabella of Angoulême, who is in wood, reclining with a book open before her, as if she were reading in bed. The effigies are good ones, larger than life-size, and they alone remain out of a considerable number. The actual burial-place was probably near to where the effigies now are ; the place is shown where graves were found, near a pillar of the tower.

The abbey was founded by one Arbrissel, and was both for men and women—not a very unusual arrangement ; we find it in Wales and (I believe) in Ireland, and at least one such joint abbey is recorded to have been a great success until the holy abbot took into his head to "shear"—that is, to try to tonsure—the " maydons," on which there was a " row royal," and the over-zealous disciplinarian had to flee for his life. But at Fontevrault both monks and nuns were under the authority of an abbess only. This is, of course, most unusual. One

has to do a good deal of hard thinking and vivid imagining at Fontevrault, beautiful as it is even in its bareness, to figure the abbey as it was in the old days. It was, indeed, a very special abbey. The abbesses were often princesses. (One, who was not, deserved to be, by her name—Gabrielle de Rochechouart-Mortemart de Vivonne, sister of Madame Montespan.) Only well-born nuns went there. It must have been immensely rich. Great rooms were set aside for tapestry work. There must have been a great library, and a room for illuminating. Then it must have been a sort of French girls' Eton, for many came there just for their education. Altogether, it was a little city. One sees to-day, besides the church, the refectory, the chapter-house, the cloister—all very excellent. Then there is the great kitchen, called the "Tower of Evrault," a remarkable twelfth-century octagon.

The church at Fontevrault has a pleasing wooden arcade or cloister, and has good "Plantagenet" or "Angevin" vaulting.

From Saumur, too, one can also visit easily Montreuil-Bellay.

There is also Baugé, with the castle rebuilt by King René, and Cholet, a busy town, now modernized, which played so important a part, and suffered so much, in the Vendée wars.

Even so, you have not exhausted Saumur till you have been down one of the great cellars. There you will see barrels and bottles beyond counting, even by logarithms; you will see the various rackings and gentle tappings and shakings by which all sediment is removed, and the amber wine gains its more than crystal clarity. As the processes of wine-making and its difficulties are rather unknown to English people, I add some notes

which may be helpful. As for the vines, at the Saumur vine-nursery, near the castle, you can see pretty well every vine that grows.

A sight of one of the great cellars is often included in the autocar tours, but is no doubt otherwise possible also. There one will see various processes, chiefly the final processes—the removal of sediment from tuns and bottles, by tapping and gently moving, till the amber colour is unclouded, and also final bottling and preparing for dispatch. Other and earlier processes, including the pressing, would not really convey much to the unskilled observer.

But a few notes on the methods and on the difficulties of wine-making may perhaps remove certain ideas which the uninitiated may harbour—such, for instance, as the idea that wine-making is largely wine-faking ; and may also reconcile purchasers to the comparatively high price of " highly processed " wines, though it must always be remembered that if a brand of special repute is demanded the name must be paid for. It is wiser, therefore, for those of moderate purse to avoid (paradoxical as it may seem) the brands whose names are most familiar to them. It is only people like the English lord in *Tartarin sur les Alpes* who can afford to call, in any part of the Continent, for " tchimppègne."

Since in any good vine-growing country the grape is abundant, one may be fairly sure that any " faking " processes would hardly pay, except where the purpose is to imitate, or to approach, some well-known style ; and often even this will be done by elaborate but harmless blends with some inferior and nameless, but probably quite pure, vintage. Moreover, the French laws on " faking " are very severe, since actual " fakes " will only destroy a good reputation. Perhaps the only

person really to be feared is the *marchand de ville*; the cellars have little to gain by wasting their time and chemicals. A reliable wine-merchant will mean a reliable wine.

It may also be pointed out that the demand of northern peoples for strong wines renders absolutely necessary some amount of "fortifying," not in order to give the necessary "headiness" but to make the wine keep and improve. It is a popular fallacy that a wine is "good" in so far as it tends to go to one's head. The lighter wines are, of course, as good, and probably as pure, as can be had; and possibly their import and consumption might be increased, to the general benefit of the community, if they could be "year-marked," so to speak—that is, if a note were added to the label to say up to what year the wine is likely to improve. Thus "short-life" wines could be imported without much risk to the middle-man. Reputable merchants now and then advertise really good brands of wine at reduced prices; presumably this means that the wine is not "fortified" to last good beyond the period reached. Many wines, of course, will not stand importation, or are not worth importing, because their name is not on that sacred list known to "the man in the train."

But to go back to Saumur and wine-making. It is near the castle that one may enter the great vine-nursery, and see almost every kind of vine and grape which serves for wine of the Saumur type. Of course the greatest and most careful observation is needed to find out which vines do best on which soils; at Saumur all these studies are carefully pursued. In all histories of French vines there is the great dividing-line (at least in the affected districts, which were considerable) of the Black Death or Phylloxera Plague. This ruinous experience revealed

the existence (in America and elsewhere) of plague-proof vines and also of plague-proof soils, such as that round Aigues-Mortes, where the salt in the sands protected and encouraged the growths.[1] In the story of the war on vine-plagues we need not say that the great Pasteur's name occurs frequently.

Let us suppose the grapes healthily grown in correspondence with their environment and duly crushed. The wine is not yet, so to speak, out of the wood. The crushing can be done in various ways, and with these we cannot here deal. But the "must" or juice is at once subject to all sorts of subtle maladies; it must be tested and the proper antidote administered. Fermentation, of course, is the action of microbes; but some of these may be harmful, and they must be countered; moreover, while the presence of air assists rapid fermentation, its absence develops alcohol; so the manufacturer of wine must give air at the early stages and shut it off at the psychological moment. Nay more, the favourable tribes of ferment-microbes must be ascertained and encouraged, by allowing small quantities of must to ferment before the main vintage is begun. Again, there are right and proper methods of improving the must, which may perhaps be over-rich in tannin or in acidity. When we come to the transformation of this must into wine we branch off into two processes, according as the wine is white or red. It may not be known that while white grapes will not give red wine, red grapes may give white wine, as also "grey" and pink wine. White wines are made without or with as little contact as possible with skins, which contain the coloration, and the pip-coverings. With red wines, therefore, a process

[1] See Barral, *La Lutte Contre le Phylloxera*, 1883, and *Influence de l'Humidité Souterraine*, etc.

is necessary which white wines do not require; it is called *cuvage*. The white grape must be very ripe, if not over-ripe, and it must receive a more thorough pressure than the red. It follows that the white wines will be in a sense cleaner and purer than reds, but will not contain so much of the "good" of the grape. If made with red grapes the contact with the colour-cells of the skins must be as brief as possible. "Grey" wines contain the full results of a double pressing, while white wines are the outcome of first pressing only; pink wines have usually about a fifth part of white grapes added to the red; fermentation is rapid, and before the colouring matter dissolves the must is drawn off into casks to complete fermentation. Pink wines are generally delicate, and you can seldom go wrong in asking whether there is in the neighbourhood a good *rosé*. While on the subject of colour it may not be generally known that champagne, which came into favour under Louis XIV, was red and still, till a method was discovered (presumably the "white" process) of giving it its lovely pale colour, and also of bottling it off just at the right moment so that it went on sparkling.

White wines contain less tannin than red, since the tannin resides in the solid parts of the grape, not allowed to remain in contact with the white must.

As the must can be improved, artificially, but quite properly, so can the wine, which may not have enough tannin, enough alcohol, enough acidity (for good wine must have a proper element of all these); or may have too much. One feels that the wine-maker must pass many sleepless nights! But when all is done that can be done, there remains all the after-care of the wine, which has, in its early stage, to be tended like an infant.

When therefore one tastes the delicious half-dry wine

of Saumur (with proper apologies to the connoisseurs; but the fact is that we English like our wines a trifle sweet, though we pretend otherwise) we must realize that we are enjoying the result of an admirable combination of Nature and Art.

Probably the expression "bottled sunshine" has more in it than poetry. We are beginning to learn more every day of the health-giving action of sunlight, and the grape is the fruit which more than all others is smitten through and through with it. Delicate and harmless wines, therefore, from the Saumur districts, are probably a quite genuine means of imbibing the beneficent effects of sunlight, in this sometimes sunless clime.

From Saumur, home. A swift, uneventful journey. No one tried to turn me out of the *Rapide*, as they generally do, for not accomplishing a sufficient number of kilometres (which, after all, is not your fault); there was only the awful experience of arriving at Montparnasse, which in future I shall avoid by getting out at the previous station, if there is one; there was no storm in the Channel; I did not—as I have on other occasions—even raise a storm in a teacup with the Southern Railway (which has always shown, in these little affairs, a true sporting spirit). I did not even lose my luggage, but sped home in a flash from Saumur, and arrived, so to speak, still fizzing.

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